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ABSTRACT

This study responds to the Board of Education's request that a plan be developed to assess and improve guidance and counseling services in the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), Maryland. Data collection activities included (1) a review of MCPS policies and regulations, and (2) analysis of data from counselor logs, counselor observations, counselor questionnaires, student questionnaires, teacher questionnaires, parent interviews, principal interviews, and surveys of other school districts' guidance and counseling programs. Chapter 1 defines the guidance and counseling function. Chapter 2 reviews the guidance and counseling function as performed in the elementary schools, the junior high/intermediate/middle schools, the senior high schools, and the supplementary centers. Chapter 3 discusses guidance staffing. Chapter 4 describes program management and monitoring. Chapter 5 contains recommendations for a new management structure for implementing the guidance and counseling program. Chapter 6 provides conclusions and recommendations. The findings indicate that the overall MCPS guidance and counseling program requires some significant modifications in structure and in management. The role of the senior high school counselors needs to be reexamined and, perhaps, reshaped to better meet the needs of students, staff, principals, and parents. (BS)

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MONTGOMERY COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

A Study of the Guidance Program and Its Management in the Montgomery County Public Schools

January 1985

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MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland 20850

A STUDY OF THE GUIDANCE PROGRAM AND ITS MANAGEMENT IN THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A STUDY OF THE GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING PROGRAM AND ITS MANAGEMENT IN THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In June, 1983, the Board of Education requested that a plan be developed to assess and improve guidance and counseling services in the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). In response to this, the Department of Educational Accountability (DEA) proposed a study that would address five major questions:

- What is the guidance function of the schools according to MCPS policy and regulations?
- What activities actually are performed as part of the guidance function?
- What is the quality of the guidance and counseling services being provided?
- How is the program currently staffed? Is the present mix of staff viable in the program as it now exists? Should resources be significantly expanded or reduced?
- What is the current system for managing and monitoring individuals providing guidance/counseling services? Is it effective? Are there alternatives that MCPS should be considering?

DATA COLLECTION ACTIVITIES

Information was sought from principals, counselors, teachers, parents, and students to help answer the study questions. Data collection activities included a review of MCPS Policies and Regulations and analyses of data obtained through counselor logs, counselor observations, counselor questionnaires, student questionnaires, teacher questionnaires, parent interviews, principal interviews, and surveys of guidance and counseling programs in other school districts within Maryland and across the nation.

SCHOOLS IN THE STUDY

Most of the data collection activities took place in 11 elementary schools (with an additional 7 for the counselor logs), 11 junior high/intermediate/middle (J/I/M) schools, and 10 senior high schools. These schools were selected so that a range of the following characteristics would be represented in the study: administrative area, type of counselor position (full-, half- or split-time), percentage of minority students, school mobility rate, and students' average achievement scores. Elementary schools involved in other major DEA studies were excluded from the study.

FINDINGS

The findings indicate that the overall guidance and counseling program in MCPS requires some significant modifications both in its structure and its management. Additionally, the role of the counselor in the senior high schools needs to be reexamined and, perhaps, reshaped to better meet the needs of students, staff, principals, and parents.

Presented below is a summary of the major study findings and DEA's recommendations.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

FINDINGS: The structure of the guidance program is poorly documented and defined. MCPS policies and regulations provide only very general programmatic guidelines, and actual service delivery varies considerably and unsystematically among schools at the same level.

RECOMMENDATIONS: There is a need to develop a coherent and comprehensive program, similar to those for other countywide programs, which provides guidelines for service delivery, standards for assessing program attainments, monitoring mechanisms, and resources for training and professional growth.

In general, MCPS documents describe the guidance and counseling function of the schools in broad and often unclear terms (e.g., to assist students to succeed in school, to help personalize school experiences). These documents do not specifically say how the guidance and counseling function is to be implemented. Goals are spelled out in only very general ways; and there is no document similar to the Program of Studies, which exists for instructional areas to provide a list of prescribed goals and objectives for the guidance and counseling functions. Furthermore, no distinctions are made in MCPS documents between the guidance and counseling function at the different school levels (elementary, J/I/M, senior high).

The picture of lack of program coordination and specification is reinforced when one looks at the services actually delivered. At each school level, there is considerable variation in the proportion of time counselor's allocate to different services. While such variation appears at the elementary level to be related to whether or not there is a counselor and whether that counselor is a half-time, split-time, or full-time person, at the J/I/M and senior high levels, there is no such explanation for the observed differences. And, the characteristics of students do not appear to systematically relate to differences in counselor activities.

Additionally, qualitative variations are evident from counselor observations. Some counselors meet with teachers on a weekly basis, while others rely on teachers to initiate contacts; some counselors make a point to be visible in the schools, while others rarely leave the guidance office area; and some counselors take advantage of their adjunct duty assignments

to interact with students, while others complain that these duties are a waste of their time.

Finally, at all levels counselors express a strong need for professional support to assist them in performing and improving their services. The lack of a system for providing coordinated consultation, peer interaction, and professional growth clearly is seen as a weakness in the eyes of counselors.

This review of the guidance and counseling program structure leads to several conclusions. First, MCPS should follow the lead of some other school districts and develop a guidance and counseling program that would specify major guidance and counseling goals and objectives for each school level. This program should not be considered an add-on to current duties, but rather it should be regarded as a comprehensive statement of expectations. Second, there is a need to define clearly the counselor's role in the schools. This role definition should include distinctions appropriate to the three school levels. This will require the development of both new formal job descriptions and new evaluation criteria which clarify the knowledge and activities for which counselors will be held responsible. Third, counselors should be provided with additional professional support and consultation to help them in their jobs and increase their skills. Fourth, monitoring should be enhanced to ensure appropriate implementation of the newly defined goals and objectives. Finally, MCPS might wish to explore some support systems developed or encouraged by MSDE, such as use of paraprofessionals, volunteers, or peer tutoring that might further strengthen their program.

PROGRAM ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

FINDINGS: The current MCPS organizational structure for managing and monitoring individuals who provide guidance services is fragmented and ineffective.

RECOMMENDATIONS: There is a need to develop a new management structure which will provide both needed support for program development and service delivery and an effective mechanism for program monitoring.

The current MCPS organizational structure for guidance and counseling services is significantly different from most other systems in Maryland and around the country. No other Maryland school system of comparable size has the supervisor of guidance administratively reporting directly to the superintendent or deputy superintendent. Most school systems have combined responsibility for the guidance and counseling function with responsibility for other pupil services or, in a smaller number of cases, with either special education or instructional services. Most other school systems have additional staff responsible for coordinating the guidance and counseling program located closer to the actual delivery of services.

The present study shows that in MCPS direct responsibility for monitoring the day-to-day work of counselors is located with school-based administrators and that most counselors are satisfied with this arrangement. However, the data also suggest that while it may be appropriate to allocate the day-to-day management responsibility for counselors to school-based administrators, some additional management/program development support is needed. Further, it is clear that resolving the problems in program

structure enumerated above--the lack of a comprehensive program of studies, the inadequacy of extant job descriptions, the lack of goals and standards for their attainment, and the inadequate professional support and training--requires some central program development and coordinating mechanism.

It is, therefore, recommended that the guidance and counseling program be treated like any other program in MCPS with divided, well-defined responsibilities at the central, area, and school levels. DEA recommends a new organization for the guidance and counseling program with the following features and responsibilities:

- Central Office: A Guidance and Counseling Unit should be located in the Office of the Associate Superintendent for Instruction and Program Development and should report directly to the associate superintendent. This unit would be charged with the planning and development of a countywide guidance and counseling program.

- Area Offices: The area offices would be charged both with providing assistance to schools in program implementation and ensuring that the guidance and counseling program is appropriately implemented. To accomplish this a counselor specialist (generalist) position should be assigned to each area office. This position would be charged with providing professional support to counselors and principals in the area.

- Local Schools: Principals would be charged with the responsibility for directly managing the implementation of the new countywide guidance and counseling program.

Exhibit E-1 shows the overall management organization of the guidance and counseling program at each of the three levels.

The Guidance and Counseling Unit in the Central Office would develop a program plan and specify competencies to be attained at the secondary level in four service areas:

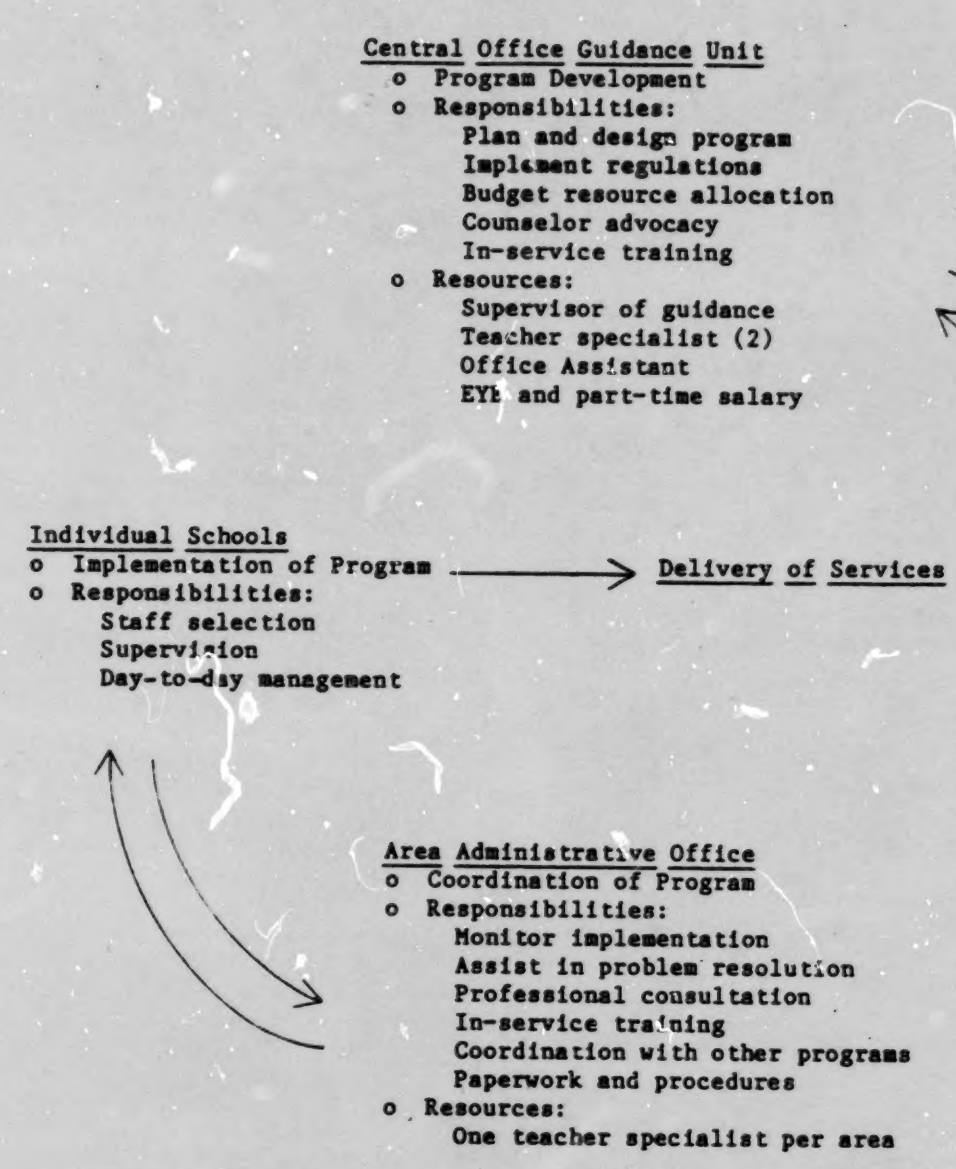
- Academic counseling
- Personal/social counseling
- College planning
- Career/vocational guidance

Elementary school counseling would constitute a fifth service area which would be charged with developing a high quality integrated program to meet the needs of students in Grades K-6. In addition, the Guidance and Counseling Unit would develop new job descriptions and evaluation criteria; provide training, professional consultation, and support; examine policies and procedures; and provide coordination with other Central Office units.

It is anticipated that much of the staffing for this unit could be accomplished through reassignment of extant positions or resources currently provided to Guidance and Counseling through the Office of the Deputy Superintendent. The supervisor position, one teacher specialist position, and some amount of clerical support is currently assigned similar responsibilities in the Office of the Deputy Superintendent. An analysis of the functions of the proposed Guidance and Counseling Unit as compared to

EXHIBIT E-1

GUIDANCE FUNCTION
RECOMMENDED MANAGEMENT SYSTEM



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similar functions in the Department of Career and Vocational Education should be performed to determine if the remaining teacher specialist position should be reassigned from that department. If not, an additional $42,250 would have to be allocated for the second teacher specialist position. Furthermore, it is anticipated that a full-time clerical position will need to be allocated to the Guidance and Counseling Unit. If this position is not available from existing allocations, an additional $19,700 would have to be budgeted.

The area offices would be responsible for coordinating, supporting, and monitoring the guidance and counseling program. Specialists would provide assistance to principals and counselors in implementing the program and monitoring its implementation to ensure that its goals are being met. To provide the staffing for the area offices, it would be necessary either to reassign three counselor specialist positions or to request three new positions in the operating budget. The cost of three new area positions would be $128,217.

The primary responsibility for the day-to-day management of the guidance and counseling program would remain, as it is now, with the school principals; except that now principals would be charged with implementing a standard countywide program, allowing some flexibility for individual school needs. Principals would continue to be responsible for selection of counseling staff, management of the guidance and counseling program as designed by the Guidance and Counseling Unit, supervision, and evaluation.

Several plans for phased implementation of the new management system should be considered. One possible plan calls for the simultaneous implementation of all aspects of the management system, which would have the area-based counselor specialists allocated, selected, and assigned to the area offices concurrent with the formation of the Central Office Guidance and Counseling Unit. A second plan would have area associate superintendents select their counselor specialist at the same time as the Guidance and Counseling Unit is being established and have these three positions report to the supervisor of guidance and counseling to assist in the development of the guidance and counseling program. They would then return to their area assignments to coordinate the new program's implementation. A third plan would defer allocation of the three area-based counselor specialist positions until the Guidance and Counseling Unit is established, staffed, and has completed the development of the guidance and counseling program and related tasks.

PROGRAM QUALITY

Satisfaction ratings of counselors, teachers, principals, parents, and students indicated that the majority of them were either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with guidance and counseling services. However, the percentage of respondents expressing satisfaction decreases from the elementary through the senior high levels (see Exhibit E-2). Other "quality" indicators, such as discrepancies in perceptions of how counselors spend and should spend their time and principal's ratings of the quality of their staff, show similar trends across school levels. These data suggest that special attention needs to be paid to enhancing the quality of services in the senior high school. Specific findings for each school level are summarized below.

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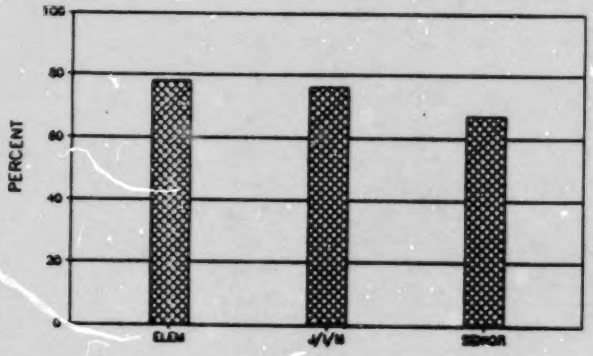
EXHIBIT E-2

COMPARISON OF SATISFACTION LEVELS ACROSS SCHOOL LEVELS

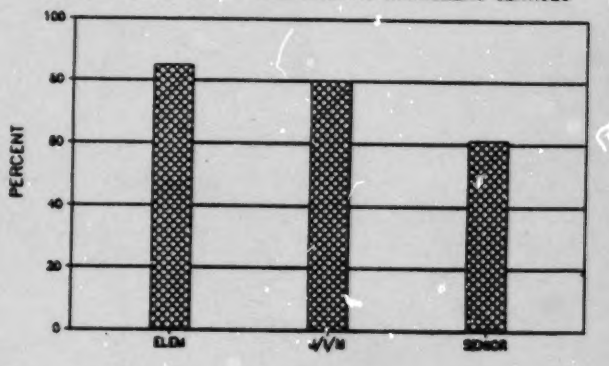
COUNSELORS

SATISFACTION LEVEL WITH GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING SERVICES



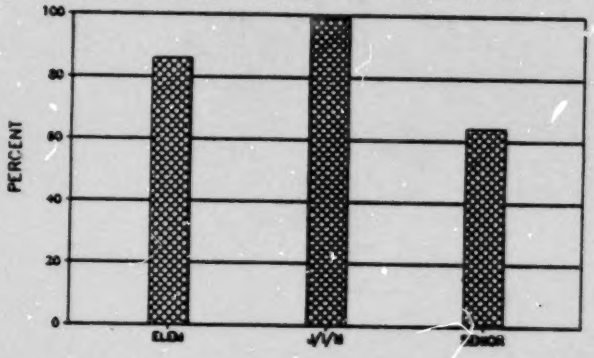
TEACHERS

SATISFACTION LEVEL WITH GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING SERVICES



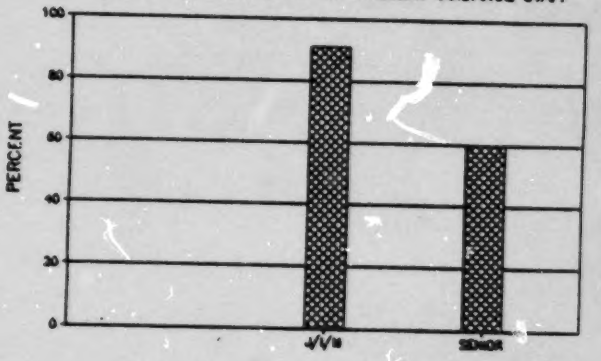
PRINCIPALS

SATISFACTION LEVEL WITH GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING SERVICES



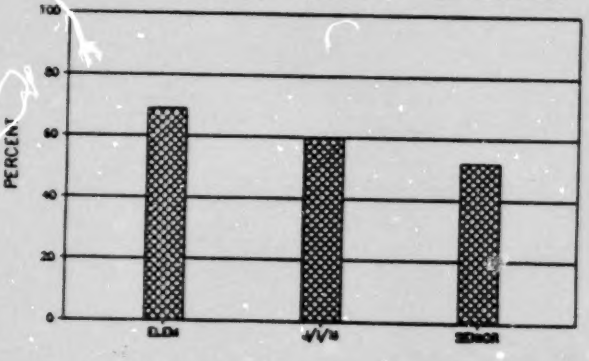
PRINCIPALS

SATISFACTION LEVEL WITH QUALITY OF PRESENT GUIDANCE STAFF



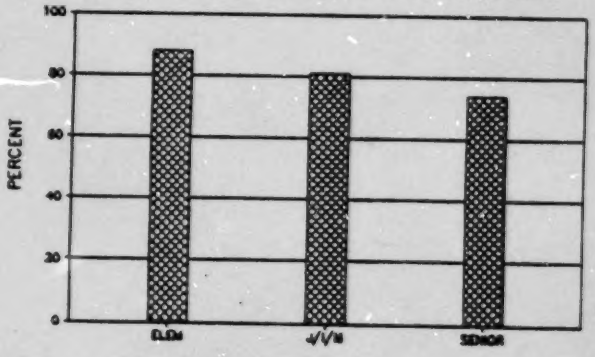
PARENTS

SATISFACTION LEVEL WITH GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING SERVICES



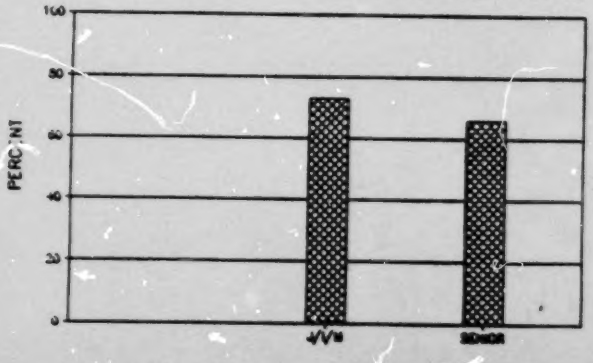
PARENTS

SATISFACTION LEVEL WITH INFORMATION FROM COUNSELORS



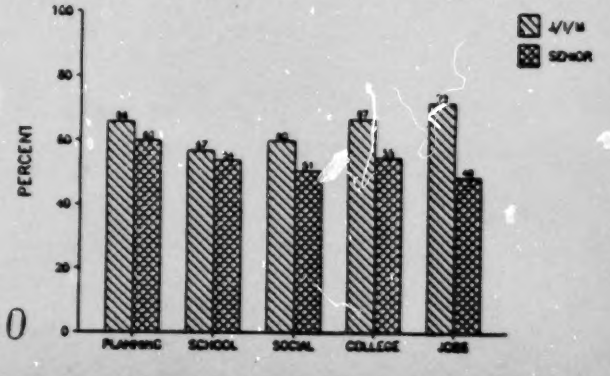
STUDENTS

PERCENTAGE STUDENTS RECOMMENDING SERVICES TO BEST FRIEND



STUDENTS

PERCENT ASSIGNING GRADES OF "A" OR "B" TO GUIDANCE SERVICES



Senior High Schools

FINDINGS: Senior high counselors, principals, and teachers unanimously feel that current allocations of time among services are far from optimal and that a number of changes are needed. Additionally, principals indicate some dissatisfaction with the quality of some of the counseling staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS: There is an immediate need to examine carefully the guidance and counseling program in the senior high schools to determine what is needed to make counseling and counselors more effective. Special attention should be given to assessing how resources might be reallocated to make maximal use of counselors' special skills and training.

In the senior high schools, counselors spend the majority of their time on developing class schedules and dealing with issues related to scheduling. Not surprisingly, some time is also spent on assisting students with college and career plans. Relatively little time is spent counseling students in the personal/social area or dealing with related problems.

The majority of teachers, counselors, principals, students, and parents give the senior high counseling services a satisfactory rating. However, there is strong feeling among counselors, principals, and teachers that counselors are not allocating their time in an optimal and cost effective manner. They feel too much time is spent on scheduling and not enough on counseling in other areas for which counselors have been specially trained.

Senior high students express some reluctance to contact counselors with problems; their reasons include their belief that a counselor could not help them, that the counselor is too busy, and that they feel uncomfortable talking to a counselor. In contrast to the J/I/M level, principals at the senior high level expressed considerable dissatisfaction with the quality of the present guidance staff, indicating that personnel, as well as programmatic, problems probably exist.

Based on these findings, DEA recommends that the counseling program at the senior high level be carefully examined to determine what is needed to make both counseling and counselors more effective. Given the uniform concern voiced regarding the amount of time allocated to scheduling, this appears to be an important area to receive initial attention. While the use of computers may provide some relief, there are changes in procedures, staff assignments, and resources that are recommended to alleviate the burden further:

First, procedures need to be developed that would free the counselor from having to see a student who wants to make a simple class change, i.e., a change involving a switch from one class to another within the same level. Along this line the policy concerning student schedule changes should be examined to see whether it is satisfactory or whether some modifications should be made. Possible modifications include charging students for every schedule change above a certain number per year or requiring principal signature for changes requested after the official course withdrawal date. An appropriate group of staff should

be convened to review current policy and suggest specific changes which should be made.

The counselors' involvement in leveling of classes also needs to be examined to see whether it is cost beneficial. For example, it might be reasonable to eliminate the counselors' involvement if such a change does not affect the level of other classes the student takes.

Second, additional part-time clerical help should be provided to the senior high schools to provide support at three critical times during the school year when the burden of scheduling responsibilities is the greatest: at the beginning of each new semester and when preregistration for the upcoming school year occurs. The part-time staff person could take over bubbling of forms and other routine activities found to be appropriate. The total cost for systemwide implementation of a plan based on this idea would be approximately $36,045. This represents hiring a part-time clerk for each high school for two 3-week periods and for one 2-week period each year. Using an hourly rate of a Grade 1 Step A clerk ($5.12), this would cost $1,638 per school per year.

Third, if the actions described above do not adequately relieve the problem, consideration should be given to hiring a full-time scheduling coordinator. This person would be responsible for working on developing the master schedule, handling routine class schedule changes, screening students who need academic counseling and referring them to the counselor, as needed, and carrying out leveling activities. During nonpeak scheduling times, this person could assist with registrar duties. If this position were classified as Step A Grade 11, the total cost per position would be $20,523. For 22 high schools, the total cost would be $451,508.

It should be stressed that these recommendations are being made to free counselor time so that they can perform more counseling-related tasks and increase student outreach activities. However, reducing the burden associated with scheduling provides only a partial solution to the dissatisfaction at the senior high level. Unless there is a definite guidance and counseling program in existence and strong support at all administrative levels for its implementation, misuse of this "free time" is very possible. Further, students will have to be persuaded that the counselors have both the time and interest to assist them with their problems. Counselors may have to be more proactive in their dealings with students. Finally, means will have to be developed to ensure that staff are adequately qualified either through retraining of existing staff or through careful hiring as positions become vacant.

Given these concerns, it is recommended that one of the first tasks of the Guidance and Counseling Unit in the Central Office be an examination of the role of the counselor at the senior high level and the development of a strategy for solving these problems in role definition and service delivery. As a part of this examination also, a careful look should be taken at the expectations which have been expressed regarding the senior high counselors to see if they are realistic, given the demands of the senior highs as well as the feelings of senior high school students.

Junior High/Intermediate/Middle Schools

FINDINGS: Teachers, counselors, principals, parents, and students are generally satisfied with the guidance and counseling program in the J/I/M schools. Beyond the overall weakness in the structure and management of the MCPS guidance and counseling services, no unique problems are found at the J/I/M level.

RECOMMENDATIONS: No recommendations for changes specific to the J/I/M level appear necessary.

At the J/I/M level, counselors provide counseling in the personal/social area primarily in individual rather than group settings. They spend some of their time counseling students in the area of program planning and scheduling. More time is spent than at any other school level holding conferences with parents, perhaps because of the importance of developing the students' four-year plan of studies and the general increase in parents' concern with academic issues.

Staff, principals, parents, and students are very satisfied with the counseling provided at the JIM level and generally feel that time is allocated appropriately among tasks.

At the J/I/M level, problems characteristic of overall weaknesses in the structure and management of the MCPS counseling program were also found (lack of a comprehensive program, lack of specific goals and standards, insufficient professional support, and inadequate job descriptions). Beyond these, however, no special issues particular to guidance at the JIM level were noted. And, it is interesting to note, in light of the findings presented above regarding senior high schools, that there was general satisfaction with the mix and quality of services despite the fact that a relatively large part of the counselors' time was devoted to paperwork.

Elementary Schools

FINDINGS: Teachers, counselors, principals, parents, and students are generally satisfied with the guidance and counseling services in the elementary schools. The type of positions counselors hold (i.e., split- or half-time) seems to affect the manner in which they are able to apportion their time among their various responsibilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS: No recommendations for programmatic changes specific to the elementary level appear necessary. However, it is recommended that where part-time counselors are assigned, half-time rather than split-time arrangements should be favored.

At the elementary level, the counselor plays the role of the nurturer, focusing on helping students with personal/social problems. Counseling is typically provided to students in groups, and meetings with individual students occupy relatively less of the counselor's time. Staff, principals, parents, and students are very satisfied with the program and feel that the counselor's time is appropriately allocated.

Problems of program coordination, supervision, and support found throughout the system are also noted at the elementary level. However, one special issue related to staffing emerges in the elementary schools. Counselors, principals, and teachers indicate several problems are posed by having a less than full-time counselor position in a school. Nonetheless, the data show that half-time counselors spend more time performing activities directly related to counseling and less time in adjunct duties.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that in schools with part-time counselor positions, priority should be given to hiring half-time over split-time counselors; or if split-time personnel are to be used, principals and area staff should work to ensure that appropriate use is being made of their time.

Supplemental Centers

FINDINGS: Principals and directors of supplemental centers believe that the guidance function is being implemented adequately in their schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS: No need is seen for the addition of a guidance counselor at these centers.

Guidance and counseling services (such as students academic/vocational/behavioral counseling, parent counseling, etc.) are reportedly available and provided by staff in various positions, e.g., teacher advisors, alternative structure teachers, program assistants, therapists, social workers, child development specialists, or work/study coordinators. For the most part, no need is seen for the addition of a guidance counselor at these centers. However, the needs of these centers should be considered in any new program developed to structure and monitor guidance and counseling services.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings indicate that the the guidance and counseling program in MCPS requires significant modifications in its structure and management. Changes in structure center on the development of a countywide guidance and counseling program, clarification of the counselors' role and responsibilities at each school level, provision of additional professional support and consultation, and improvement in the monitoring system. Changes in management involve the establishment of an administrative structure that will provide for the implementation of each of these functions and do so in the most efficient manner.

It should be stressed that these changes are envisioned as providing a total package whose parts are interdependent. The changes should not be adopted selectively. For example, providing a comprehensive program and set of goals without also providing revised job descriptions as well as additional supports and training would probably be counterproductive. Similarly, expanding the role of the Central Office without also providing for monitoring and assistance in the area offices might once again lead to a situation where resources invested in development are wasted by inadequate implementation supports. Thus, the implementation of all recommended changes is viewed as critical to improving the guidance and counseling services Montgomery County Public Schools offers its students.

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Appendix B B-1

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In June, 1983, the Board of Education requested that a plan be developed to assess and improve guidance and counseling services in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). In response to this, the Department of Educational Accountability (DEA) proposed a study that would address five major questions:

- What is the guidance function of the schools according to MCPS policy and regulations?
- What activities actually are performed as part of the guidance function?
- What is the quality of the guidance and counseling services being provided?
- How is the program currently staffed? Is the present mix of staff viable in the program as it now exists? Should resources be significantly expanded or reduced?
- What is the current system for managing and monitoring individuals providing guidance/counseling services? Is it effective? Are there alternatives that MCPS should be considering?

DATA COLLECTION ACTIVITIES

Information was sought from principals, counselors, teachers, parents, and students to help answer the study questions. Findings in this report are based on a review of MCPS Policies and Regulations and the results of counselor logs, observations of counselors, counselor questionnaires, principal interviews, teacher questionnaires, parent interviews, student questionnaires, and surveys of guidance and counseling programs within Maryland and across the nation. See Appendix A, Table A-1 for more information on data collection activities.

SCHOOLS IN THE STUDY

Most of the data collection activities took place in 11 elementary schools (with an additional 7 for the counselor logs), 11 junior high/intermediate/middle (J/I/M) schools, and 10 senior high schools. These schools were selected so that a range of the following characteristics would be represented in the study: location in administrative area, type of counselor position (full-, half-, or split-time), percentage of minority students, school mobility rate, and students' average achievement scores. Elementary schools involved in other major DEA studies were excluded from the study.

ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

The report is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 describes the guidance and counseling function of the schools according to MCPS policy and regulations and compares MCPS with other school districts nationwide in the field of guidance and counseling. Chapter 2 describes the guidance and counseling activities that are performed in the schools and summarizes similarities and differences across the elementary, J/I/M, and senior high levels. Chapter 3 presents study findings related to staffing resources assigned to the delivery of guidance and counseling services. Chapter 4 discusses the current management and monitoring structure for guidance and counseling services. Chapter 5 describes a new management organization for the Guidance and Counseling Program in MCPS. Finally, Chapter 6 summarizes the major findings of the study and offers recommendations to alleviate current problems.

CHAPTER 1

DEFINITION OF THE GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING FUNCTION

MCPS Policy Statement IJA (Board Resolution No. 410-78, June 12, 1978) and Administrative Regulation IJA-RA (Administrative History: Formerly Regulation 335-7, November 25, 1981) were examined to determine the following:

- The guidance and counseling function of MCPS
- The tasks that make up the guidance and counseling function and who is expected to perform them
- Differences in the guidance and counseling function at the different school levels (elementary, junior high/intermediate/middle, and senior high)

What follows is a detailed description of the information found in MCPS documents and a comparison of MCPS documents with information from other school districts, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), and current literature. For each, the descriptions are divided into three sections: the guidance and counseling function, the tasks intended to be performed and by whom, and the guidance and counseling function at the different school levels.

REVIEW OF MCPS DOCUMENTS

Definition of the Guidance and Counseling Function

It is difficult to summarize what MCPS sees as the guidance and counseling function of the schools because terms in the documents are often not clearly defined. For example, MCPS policy statement lists eight student outcomes (Exhibit 1.1) that should result from a "comprehensive program of counseling, consulting, and coordinating." No description of this "comprehensive program" is given, nor is there any reference made to another source for this information. In fact, there is no document that describes what this comprehensive program is or should be other than some materials developed by the countywide Guidance Advisory Committee.

Often, terms are so vague that they can take almost any desired meaning. The regulations list three general goals of the counseling program: to assist students to succeed in school, to help personalize school experiences, and to develop skills necessary for appropriate decision making. Depending on one's definition and interpretation of "succeed," "personalize," or "appropriate," these goals may not be accomplished to the same degree in all schools.

Tasks Intended To Be Performed and by Whom

Though the documents state that the guidance and counseling function should be shared with other school staff, counselors appear to have the bulk of the responsibility for actual service delivery to students (Exhibit 1.2). Counselors are responsible for assisting students both academically and psychologically and for being a resource to parents and school staff. They are viewed as information collectors, interpreters, and distributors who

EXHIBIT 1.1

Student Outcomes Specified in the Policy Statement

- The student will have increased self-awareness and a positive sense of identity.
- The student will understand his abilities, interests, and values as factors in making education choices and will utilize logical processes in decision making.
- The student will become increasingly proficient in analyzing his learning patterns and identifying and developing his potential.
- The student will know there is an adult within the school community who, upon request, will act as his advocate in any reasonable cause.
- The student will know he has access to a counselor of his choice to discuss all concerns and that confidentiality will be respected.
- The student and parents will utilize counseling services for assistance with personal and social problems which affect learning, motivation and personal development of the student.
- The student will have increased awareness of the world of work and of options open to him for employment and/or future education.
- The students who need special attention will be identified and will be provided with modifications to the regular curriculum or with program alternatives to motivate them and make their school years productive.

EXHIBIT 1.2

Counselor Roles/Responsibilities as Specified in MCPS Policy and Regulations

Policy Statement

- Collect information form all relevant professional and support personnel and interpret it to students, parents, and staff when needed to assist the students decision making.
- Take an active part in the career education program.
- Meet with each secondary student annually to plan or revise the educational program that is consistent with his/her needs.
- Consolidate information presented to him by students concerning their instructional needs and communicate this information to teachers and departments to be utilized in improving their curriculum and delivery techniques. Each school will have a procedure for such communication.

Regulations

- Assist teachers and parents in helping students achieve increased self-awareness and feelings of self-worth.
- Assist students in acquiring decision-making skills in order that they can learn to make appropriate educational, career and personal decisions.
- Interpret various instruments to help students analyze career interests, abilities, and values with respect to career awareness.
- Provide opportunities for students to meet individually or in groups to discuss personal/social problems that may affect learning, motivation, and personal development.
- Act as a student advocate in any reasonable cause.
- Collect information from all relevant sources and interpret this data to students, parents, and staff when needed in planning students' education programs.
- Meet with each secondary student annually to plan an educational program consistent with his/her needs.
- Take active role in assisting the administration to inform students and parents of guidance services through assemblies, newsletters, orientation sessions, handbooks, or other appropriate means.

should be involved in helping students with decision making.

The Guidance and Counseling Function at Different School Levels

There is nothing written in MCPS documents which suggests that the guidance and counseling function of the school is or should be different for the different school levels. In fact, there is only one current job description for guidance counselors (available from the Division of Salary Administration, Certification, and Records). This job description, written in June, 1974, contains no distinction in professional requirements or job duties for guidance counselors at the different grade levels. The only available written information that addresses this issue is contained in folders prepared by the countywide Guidance Advisory Committee.

REVIEW OF MATERIALS FROM OTHER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING SOURCES

In addition to knowing what is in MCPS documents, it is equally important to know how MCPS compares with "other sources" in the field of guidance and counseling. Focusing on the three areas mentioned above (definition of the guidance function, tasks intended to be performed, and school level differences) information available from 36 other school districts nationwide, MSDE, ASCA, and the current counseling literature was reviewed. This review disclosed the following:

Definition of the Guidance and Counseling Function

In general, MCPS documents were similar to other sources in that they contained fairly broad statements that suggested the general emphasis that guidance and counseling services should take but provided no specific steps to implement them. However, several differences were found: (1) some school districts developed manuals or guides that provided detailed descriptions of the objectives of their guidance and counseling programs, (2) MSDE suggested several activities that might lead to attaining the goals they identified, and (3) the ASCA and current literature strongly emphasize addressing students' developmental needs in the delivery of guidance and counseling services.

Tasks Intended To Be Performed and by Whom

There is a great deal of overlap between the services implied or specified in documents from MCPS and other school districts. Services can be grouped into five main areas: counseling, consulting, program management/coordination, assessment, and information management. Two services frequently appeared in other school districts but not in MCPS materials: facilitating communications among school staff and coordinating the administration of standardized and/or nonstandardized tests. Both MCPS and MSDE documents indicate that the delivery of guidance and counseling services is not only the responsibility of the guidance counselor. While MSDE offers six support systems--teacher advisors, peer helpers, paraprofessionals, volunteers, guidance curriculum, and computer-based guidance information (Exhibit 1.3), which could be used to help deliver guidance and counseling services--none of these appear to be uniformly in use throughout MCPS; implementation appears to be left to the initiative of principals and/or counselors.

EXHIBIT 1.3

Six Support Systems Suggested by the Maryland State Department of Education

- Teacher Advisor - assigning teachers a number of students to advise with emphasis placed on educational and career planning.
- Peer Helper - using students as peer counselors for students younger or of the same age to provide services ranging from academic tutoring to disseminating information.
- Paraprofessionals - assigning routine clerical duties and other informational tasks to noncounseling or paraprofessional employees.
- Volunteers - using community volunteers to perform a variety of guidance-related functions, including academic tutoring and career counseling.
- Guidance Curriculum - providing minicourses or units on guidance-related subjects within the regular academic curriculum as taught by either counselors, teachers, or counselor-teacher teams.
- Computer-based Guidance Information - providing students with career and educational information via computers.

The Guidance and Counseling Function at Different School Levels

MCPS documents identify only one guidance and counseling function specific to a school level: counselors' annual meeting with secondary students to plan their educational programs. The seven school districts that did differentiate counselor job descriptions by school levels did not specify many differences in counselor responsibilities at the different levels. However, at the elementary level, there was more emphasis on early intervention and prevention of academic and personal problems. Both MSDE and ASCA guidelines indicate that the guidance and counseling function of the schools is the same at the various school levels but imply that because school levels may be organized differently and students may have different developmental needs, counseling and guidance services may need to be delivered in a variety of ways.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES RAISED BY FINDINGS

The primary issue identified in this chapter is the lack of definition available to describe the current guidance and counseling function in MCPS. Existing documentation describes the guidance and counseling program in very broad and often unclear terms.

The implications of this situation are both numerous and significant. First, it is extremely difficult to design and develop delivery systems and procedures for an ill-defined program. Second, the lack of a well-defined program makes it difficult to ensure uniformity of services offered to students or to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of these services. Third, the lack of a program definition also precludes the ability to analyze periodically and review the guidance and counseling function, to set priorities among various program components, or to compare the MCPS guidance and counseling program to national trends and practices in other school systems. A consequence of this situation is the increased difficulty faced by management in providing advocacy to the guidance and counseling function. It is difficult to request and advocate additional resources for an ill-defined program.

A similar issue identified in this chapter is the lack of a detailed job description for counselor position classifications. The lack of a clear guidance and counseling function, as described above, has led to the situation where only a single, very broad, outdated job description exists and is used for all counselor classifications. As such, there is no formal distinction among the counselors' role at the elementary, J/I/M, and high school levels. The lack of a well-defined program and the resulting lack of counselor expectancy makes it difficult for management to use explicit criteria for selecting counselors and evaluating their performance.

CHAPTER 2

THE GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING FUNCTION AS PERFORMED IN THE SCHOOLS

This chapter describes the guidance and counseling activities that are performed at each of the three school levels (elementary, junior high/intermediate/middle, and senior high) as well as the supplementary centers. School level descriptions examine two main topics: (1) services delivered (e.g., proportion of time counselors spend on tasks) and (2) consumer perspectives of guidance and counseling services.

DESCRIPTION OF THE GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING FUNCTION AS PERFORMED IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Services Delivered

Elementary counselors spent the majority of their time in three types of activities (Figure 1): student counseling (39%), conferences (29%), and paperwork (12%). While the topics most frequently discussed during counseling sessions dealt with personal/social concerns such as peer relationships and behavior problems, the counselors were often called upon to counsel students on a variety of topics (Exhibit 2.1).

Time allocation to the various activities was influenced strongly by type of job position (full-, split-, or half-time). Reports from counselors and observers indicate that half-time and split-time counselors spent a greater proportion of their time on paperwork than full-time counselors. In fact, the ratio is 2 to 1 for those in split-time vs. full-time positions (18% vs. 9%, Exhibit 2.2). However, half-time counselors spent a greater proportion of their time counseling students than counselors with either full- or split-time positions (Exhibit 2.3). This is largely a function of the fact that half-time counselors report spending very little time with adjunct duties. Perhaps because the half-time counselor's time is limited, special efforts are taken by both the principal and the counselor to ensure that the half-time person's counseling skills are optimally used. It may also be that half-time counselors are not present in the school enough to be pressed into service for ancillary tasks.

This finding regarding the half-time counselor must be considered in light of the fact that concern was expressed by many school staff (counselors, principals, and teachers) regarding the effectiveness of the half-time and split-time job positions. The data strongly suggest that the respondents perceive such counselors to be less effective than those allocated to a school full time because of their limited availability. This criticism was not directed at the individuals in these positions but at the positions themselves. The counselor who is in the school only part of the day or part of a week may not be available to deal with crisis situations as they occur and may have less time to consult with other school staff.

Despite this concern about half- and split-time staff, satisfaction with counseling services was generally high at the elementary level. In many instances, allowances were made for the restrictions placed on counselors because of their half-time status. For example, one principal indicated

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Figure 1

Percentage of Time Elementary Counselors Spent Performing Various Tasks as Reported on Counselor Logs

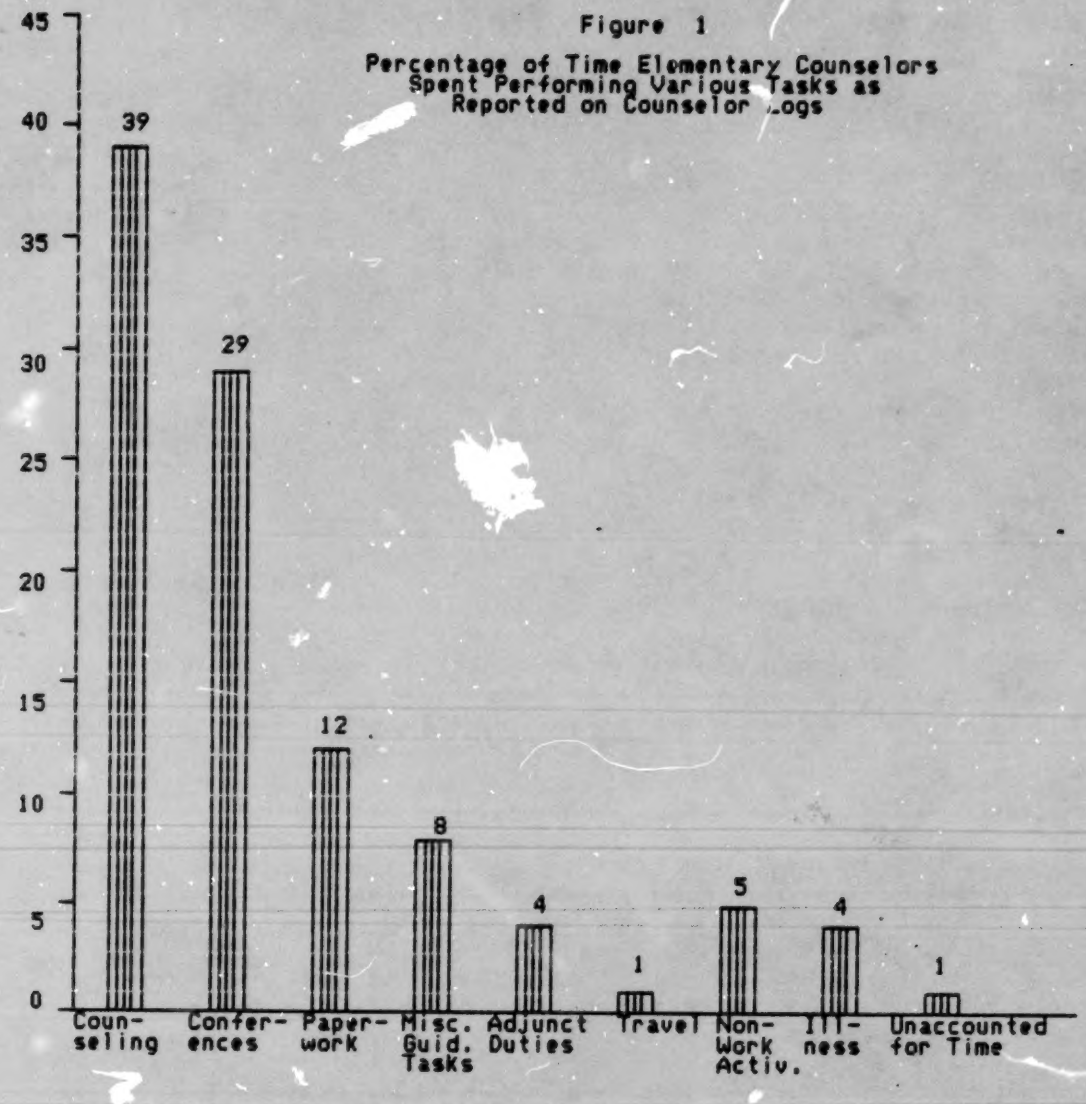

EXHIBIT 2.1

Percentage of Times Various Topics Were Discussed by Elementary Counselors During Observed Counseling Sessions*

ACADEMIC	
Class level placement (resource/advanced)	0
Test results/how to take tests	0
Arranging remedial help	**
Ways to improve schoolwork/study skills	6
Checking on homework/schoolwork assignments	7
Grades	6
Attendance	**
Career awareness/application/information	**
Transition to next grade	1
Problem-solving/decision-making strategies	4
School environment	0
Credits	0
Graduation	0
Alternative Education Programs	0
PERSONAL/SOCIAL	
Drug use and abuse	**
Health/medication	1
Behavior/discipline	8
Mediation between student/parent	0
Mediation between student/teacher	1
Social skills/adjustment/improvement	18
Coping with physical/emotional concerns	3
Parental marital problem	4
Peer relationships	8
Climate at home	12
Student concerns about upcoming conference	**
Student interests/hobbies	13
CLASS SCHEDULING	
Explaining schedule change forms	0
Making class schedule changes	**
Reviewing class schedule	0
Describing master schedule	0
Describing school/class/teacher	**
Developing class schedule	0
MISCELLANEOUS	
Late opening schedule	0
Scheduling parent and/or student meeting	2
Rescheduling parent and/or student meeting	2
Extracurricular activities	2
Supplies/form requests	5
General information (bus schedule, lost keys)	1
TOTAL NUMBER OF COUNSELING SESSIONS OBSERVED	243

* Columns do not add to 100 percent because more than one topic may have been discussed during a counseling session.

** Less than 1 percent.

EXHIBIT 2.2

Percentage of Time Elementary Counselors Spent on Various Types of Paperwork*

	Full-time (N=9)	Split-time (N=3)	Half-time (N=3)	All (N=15)
EMT/ARD meetings	4	6	6	5
Updating student files/records/ notes/grades	2	5	1	3
Writing notes/memos to teachers	2	3	2	2
Writing letters/memos to parents	1	2	1	1
Other	1	2	5	2
TOTAL	9	18	15	12

*Based on counselor log data.

EXHIBIT 2.3

Percentage of Time Elementary Counselors Spent on Performing Counseling Activities*

	Full-time (N=9)	Split-time (N=3)	Half-time (N=3)	All (N=15)
INDIVIDUAL STUDENT COUNSELING				
Academic	3	3	3	2
College/career awareness	**	—	—	**
Personal/social	11	14	13	13
Other	2	—	2	1
Total	16	17	16	16
GROUP STUDENT COUNSELING				
Academic	2	1	2	3
College/career awareness	1	—	1	**
Personal/social	15	11	22	18
Other	1	2	6	2
Total	19	14	30	23
TOTAL COUNSELING TIME	34	31	46	39

* Based on counselor log data.
**Less than .5 percent.

that while he was satisfied with the guidance and counseling services provided by the counselor, he was dissatisfied with the fact that the counselor did not have enough time to deliver to services to all who needed them. When school staff were asked how satisfied they were with a variety of guidance services offered at their schools, the majority indicated considerable satisfaction. On the average, 78 percent of the counselors, 86 percent of the principals, and 85 percent of the teachers indicated that they were either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the current guidance and counseling services (Exhibits 2.4, 2.5, 2.6). Additionally, 69 percent of the teachers reported that they were able to meet with the counselor in a timely manner, and 77 percent characterized their professional working relationship with their school counselor as "very positive."

Further, teachers and counselors generally reported few differences between the percentage of time they thought counselors presently spend and should spend on various tasks (Exhibit 2.7). Areas where some change in time allocation was advocated included an increase in the amount of time counselors spend on student academic counseling and parent and family counseling and a decrease in the time spent on Educational Management Teams and School or Area Admissions, Review, and Dismissal Committees. Additionally, teachers would like more time for teacher consultation. Principals were generally satisfied with present time allocations.

The study also found that how counselors distributed their time among their responsibilities varied from school to school (Exhibit 2.8). At the elementary level, the greatest variation occurred in the proportion of time counselors spent in conferences (8%-36%) and in individual student counseling (3%-30%). While such variation may reflect the differential needs of the schools served, it may also be symptomatic of the fact that no guidelines for service delivery exist. This issue will be discussed further in the section on similarities and differences across school levels.

Consumer Perspectives

In examining the activities of the elementary counselor, the study also gathered data on what might be called the "consumer perspective." Specifically, parent and student awareness of, use of, and satisfaction with services were examined.

Parent surveys indicated moderate awareness of services available. Only 31 percent of the elementary parents surveyed knew the name of their child's counselor. Forty-nine percent of the parents indicated they had received information about the school's guidance services, while another 21 percent indicated that they could not remember if they had received such information.

Twenty percent of the parents surveyed had contacted the counselor during the 1983-84 school year. The most frequent reasons for these contacts were to discuss the child's learning problems, test scores or grades, and behavior problems (Exhibit 2.9).

Despite this modest level of contact, most elementary parents were satisfied with the overall guidance and counseling services available in their child's school. Sixty-nine percent rated the overall guidance and counseling services as either "excellent" or "good" (Exhibit 2.10). More importantly,

EXHIBIT 2.4

Percentage of Elementary Counselors Expressing Various Levels of Satisfaction with the Delivery of Guidance Services*

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Academic Counseling (N=29)	17	72	10	0
Personal Counseling (N=29)	45	45	7	3
Career/College Awareness (N=22)	5	73	23	0
Parent Consultation (N=29)	41	45	14	0
Parent Counseling (N=27)	18	41	37	4
Family Counseling (N=24)	8	42	46	4
Teacher Consultation (N=28)	39	50	7	4
Serving in EMT, SARD, ARRD (N=29)	38	45	17	0
Average	26	52	20	2

*Based on counselor questionnaire data.

EXHIBIT 2.5

Percentage of Elementary Principals Indicating Various Levels of Satisfaction with the Delivery of Guidance Services*
(N=18)

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Academic Counseling	61	22	11	6
Personal Counseling	78	6	11	5
Career/College Awareness	25	63	0	12
Parent Consultation	67	28	0	5
Parent Counseling	47	33	13	7
Family Counseling	25	50	17	8
Teacher Consultation	61	28	6	5
Serving in EMT, SARD, AARD	72	22	0	6
Average	55	31	7	7

*Based on principal interview data.

EXHIBIT 2.6

Percentage of Elementary Teachers Indicating Various Levels of Satisfaction with the Delivery of Guidance Services*

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Academic Counseling (N=126)	32	55	13	1
Personal Counseling (N=140)	43	43	11	3
Career/College Awareness (N=39)	31	56	13	0
Parent Consultation (N=133)	33	51	14	2
Parent Counseling (N=99)	32	57	9	2
Family Counseling (N=80)	34	49	16	1
Teacher Consultation (N=132)	41	41	16	3
Serving in EMT, SARD, AARD (N=134)	46	41	10	3
Average	36	49	13	2

*Based on counselor questionnaire data.

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EXHIBIT 2.7

Percentage of Time Elementary Counselors, Principals, and Teachers Believe that Counselors Spend and Should Spend on Various Guidance Tasks*

	COUNSELORS (N=28)			PRINCIPALS (N=18)			TEACHERS (N=93)		
	Time Spent	Time Should be Spent	Difference	Time Spent	Time Should be Spent	Difference	Time Spent	Time Should be Spent	Difference
Student Counseling	47	49	+ 2	47	48	+ 1[b]	44	49	+11[b]
College/Career Counseling	2	3	+ 1	1	1	0	2	2	0
Develop/Change Class Schedules	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Parent Consultation/ Counseling	16	20	+ 4[c]	19	20	+ 1	19	24	+ 5[a]
Teacher Consultation	15	16	+ 1	13	14	+ 1	9	11	+ 2[a]
EMTs, SARDs, AARDs	15	10	- 5[a]	10	10	—	22	11	-11[a]
Paperwork	5	3	- 2[a]	7	5	- 2[a]	3	2	- 1[a]
Average Absolute Difference			2.5			.8			4

*Based on counselor questionnaire, principal interview, and teacher questionnaire data.

a. Significant ($p < .05$).
b. Significant ($p < .05$) for academic counseling, not personal/social counseling.
c. Significant ($p < .05$) for parent and family counseling, not parent consultation.

EXHIBIT 2.8

Individual Elementary Counselor Profiles of How Time Is Spent*

	Full-time			Split-time			Half-time		Range
Counselor ID:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
	Percentage of Time								
Individual Student Counseling	19	3	14	5	14	14	30	24	3-30
Group Student Counseling	23	15	21	17	19	13	19	26	13-26
Conferences	15	18	26	36	34	24	8	16	8-36
Paperwork	3	18	1	12	5	5	8	4	1-18
Miscellaneous Guidance Tasks	4	16	7	9	4	4	10	6	4-16
Management/Organization	27	14	10	10	16	9	18	14	9-27
Adjunct Duties	4	0	2	1	3	15	0	0	0-15
Travel	0	0	2	2	0	4	0	0	0- 4
Nonwork activities	4	17	19	8	4	12	8	11	4-19

*Based on counselor observations.

EXHIBIT 2.9

Percentage of Parents of Elementary Students Who Identified Various Reasons Why They Contacted Counselors*
(N=89)

Reasons	Percentage of parents who contacted the counselor
Learning problems	40
Behavior problems	31
Test scores/grades	37
Personal problems	28
Parent education program	11
Classes/scheduling	9
Child Adjustment	9
Problems with teachers	3
Administrative information	1
College information	—
Job information	—

*Based on parent interview data.

EXHIBIT 2.10

Percentage of Parents of Elementary Students Who Indicated Various Ratings of Guidance Counseling Services*
(N=277)

Excellent	Good	Adequate	Fair	Poor
23	46	18	6	6

*Based on parent interview data.

of the parents who actually contacted the counselor during the school year, 88 percent indicated that they were either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the information they received from the counselor (Exhibit 2.11).

Surveys of students indicated that the vast majority (88%) knew their counselor's name. However, only 45 percent indicated they had met with a counselor during the 1983-84 school year. The most frequent reason students saw a counselor was to discuss personal/social topics. Most often counseling was conducted in a group setting (Exhibit 2.12). (For a more detailed description of student contacts with counselors, see Appendix B.)

Student responses indicated that the majority of students who came into contact with counselors were satisfied with what they had learned from their experiences. It is important to keep in mind, however, that less than half of the students surveyed actually received some type of counseling. Two indicators of student satisfaction were collected: (1) whether or not students would recommend their counselor to their best friend if their friend wanted to talk to an adult about some problem or concern and (2) the letter grade students assigned to indicate the usefulness of their meeting(s) with their counselor. Depending on the topic and the setting, 69 percent to 80 percent of the elementary students who saw a counselor indicated that they would recommend the counselor to their best friend (Exhibit 2.13). With respect to the grades given to counselors, again depending on the topic and the setting, 73 to 89 percent of the students graded the usefulness of their meetings with either an "A" or "B" (Exhibit 2.14).

Between 38 and 59 percent of the students, depending on the topic and setting of their meeting with the counselor, indicated changes in their behavior and feelings after their meeting. Some of these changes included budgeting time better, improving homework, having a better attitude, and no longer blaming themselves for their parents' divorce. One fifth grader noted that "I now know how to go on in life and get a headstart."

Data on the reasons why students did not see counselors suggest that there may only be a small percentage of students who might have been in need of guidance and counseling services and did not receive them (Exhibit 2.15). The vast majority of elementary students who did not see a counselor indicated that they simply had no problem to discuss (84%).

Finally, there was a large amount of variation across elementary schools in percentage of students who saw a counselor. One school had as few as 17 percent of the students seeing the counselor; another school had as many as 68 percent of the students seeing the counselor. Analyses indicated that neither grade level, grades earned, sex, or race was associated with visits to the counselor for elementary students. The only significant trend in these data occurred for those students who saw counselors about personal/social topics: Students who earned lower letter grades were more likely to have seen the counselor to discuss this topic (Exhibit 2.16). Of greater importance was the type of counselor assigned to the school. In general, split-time counselors had the greatest variation at their schools (17%-56%) and the lowest average percentage of students seeing the counselor (Exhibit 2.17). This may be an indication of the difficulties split-time counselors encounter in trying to cover two schools. They have the same problems as half-time counselors because they may not be available to

EXHIBIT 2.11

Percentage of Parents of Elementary Students Indicating Various Levels of Satisfaction with Information Received from Counselors*
(N=85)

Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
46	42	5	5	2

*Based on parent interview data.

EXHIBIT 2.12

Percentage of Elementary Students Who Saw a Counselor About School Work or for Personal/Social Problems Either in a Group or Individually*
(N=595)

Group meeting about school work	16
Individual meeting about school work	11
Group meeting about personal/social topics	32
Individual meeting about personal/social topics	21

*Based on student questionnaire data.

EXHIBIT 2.13

Percentage of Elementary Students Who Indicated That They Would Recommend Guidance Counseling Services to Their Best Friend (N=595)

Topic and Setting	Percentage
School Work	
Group (N=92)	80
Individual (N=61)	69
Personal/Social	
Group (N=185)	75
Individual (N=117)	74

*Based on student questionnaire data.

EXHIBIT 2.14

Percentage of Elementary Students Who Assigned Various Letter Grades to the Usefulness of Their Meetings with Their Counselor*

	Grade Given to Usefulness of Meetings:				
	A	B	C	D	E
School Work					
Group (N=92)	27	62	9	1	4
Individual (N=61)	41	38	16	2	3
Personal/Social					
Group (N=170)	36	46	12	4	2
Individual (120)	33	40	17	4	5

*Based on student questionnaire data.

EXHIBIT 2.15

Percentage of Elementary Students Indicating Various Reasons for Not Seeing a Counselor*
(N=296)

	Percentage
Had no problem to discuss with the counselor (N=273)**	84
Didn't feel comfortable talking to the counselor	12
Preferred to talk to someone else	11
Did not know who the counselor was	9
Did not know what the counselor did	7
Did not think counselor could help	7
Could not talk to the counselor without others knowing about it	5
Counselor was always too busy	2
I was afraid the counselor would tell someone else what I had said	4

* Based on student questionnaire data.
**The number is different for elementary students on this item because this item was excluded from the instrument used in the pilot survey.

EXHIBIT 2.16

Descriptive Information on Elementary Students
Who Saw the Counselor About Different Topics and in Different Settings

	All Students (N=269)	School Work in Group (N=95)	School Work Individually (N=65)	Personal/ Social in Group (N=191)	Personal/ Social Individually (N=124)
	Percentage				
Grade					
Fourth	46	17	12	33	20
Fifth	45	15	10	32	21
Grades Earned					
A	36	11	4	25 *	11 **
A-B	41	12	10	29	15
B	53	17	9	29	28
B-C	53	26	16	42	31
C	71	24	18	47	41
C-D	50	8	17	33	33
Sex					
Male	41	15	11	30	18
Female	49	17	11	34	24
Race					
Asian	30	10	8	18	16
Black	47	18	17	41	29
Hispanic	38	13	3	25	19
White	48	16	11	33	20

* Indicates statistically significant differences in categories ($p < .05$).

** Indicates statistically significant differences in categories ($p < .05$) and in correlation between grades earned and percentage of students who saw a counselor about personal/social topics in a group setting ($r=.90$).

EXHIBIT 2.17

Percentage of Elementary Students Who Saw a School Counselor*

	Mean	Range of Percentages Across Schools**	Number of Schools Range Based On
Elementary (N=595)	45	17-68	12
Full-time	50	33-68	5
Split-time	37	17-56	5
Half-time	55	41-68	2

* The data are based on students questionnaire and reflect either group or individual meetings.

** Data are only included for schools with 30 or more student respondents.

students or staff in crisis situations. In addition, they may have more rigid schedules to follow to keep up with two schools; or they may work with principals with different views of how counselors should function in their schools.

Elementary Schools Without Counselors

During the 1983-84 school year, 62 elementary schools did not have a guidance counselor assigned to them. To determine how the guidance and counseling function was implemented in these schools, interviews were conducted with eighteen elementary school principals who did not have a counselor position in their schools. These interviews revealed the following:

- Though guidance and counseling tasks were not formally assigned, they typically were performed by teachers.
- The following problems with the delivery of guidance and counseling services were identified: services were not as thorough as they could be (83%), services were not systematically provided (56%), services were limited (44%), and services were not equally available to all students (33%).
- The following areas of responsibility were identified as being potential areas for support by counselors: counseling students individually and in groups, counseling and conducting outreach programs for parents/families, participating in Educational Management Team and School Admissions, Review, and Dismissal Committee meetings, and intervening in crisis situations.

Among elementary principals, the need for counselors is generally, but not universally, endorsed. While the vast majority (66%) of principals interviewed stated that they believe all elementary schools need counselors, 33 percent expressed a different opinion. The latter gave a variety of reasons for their opinion citing the differential needs of small and large schools and suggesting other priorities for additional staff support.

A variety of reasons were also offered by those principals supporting the view that all elementary schools need counselors. The most frequent response stressed the need students have to discuss personal, social, and academic problems with someone specifically trained to help them. Some principals also feel that it is difficult for them to be the disciplinarian and still be expected to counsel students. These principals feel that a counselor would be less threatening and would provide a valuable service to the students and support to the principal.

DESCRIPTION OF THE GUIDANCE FUNCTION AS PERFORMED IN JUNIOR HIGH/INTERMEDIATE/MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Services Delivered

Figure 2 illustrates how J/I/M counselors apportioned their time among various guidance and counseling tasks. As can be seen, a majority of their time was spent on the same three types of activities as those reported at

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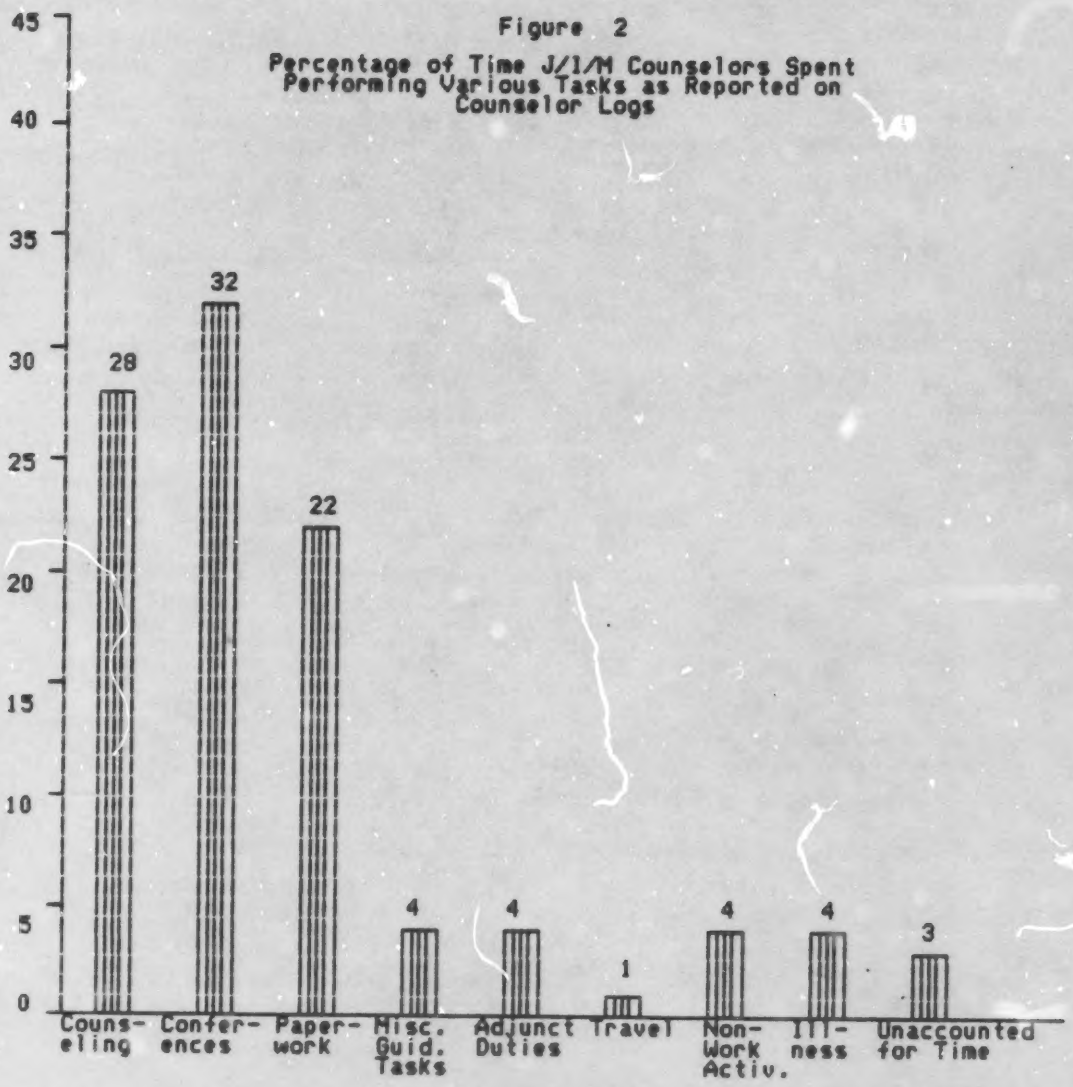
Figure 2

Percentage of Time J/I/M Counselors Spent Performing Various Tasks as Reported on Counselor Logs



the elementary level: student counseling (28%), conferences (32%), and paperwork (22%). In general, a large portion of their counseling time dealt with personal/social and academic topics (Exhibit 2.18). Like elementary counselors, J/I/M counselors counseled students on a wide range of topics (Exhibit 2.19). In contrast to elementary counselors, however, J/I/M counselors spent a slightly greater portion of time in individual counseling than group counseling. J/I/M counselors spent the largest portion of their time in conferences, with 32 percent of that conference time taken up with meetings with parents (Exhibit 2.20). The considerable time spent during the eighth-grade year developing students' four-year plans probably accounts for this. Unlike counselors at the elementary level, the proportion of time spent on paperwork was almost as large as the proportion of time spend on counseling. Paperwork tasks were distributed equally across several activities (Exhibit 2.21).

Satisfaction with guidance and counseling services was high. On the average, 76 percent of the counselors, 99 percent of the principals, and 80 percent of the teachers indicated that they were either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the services offered (Exhibits 2.22, 2.23, 2.24). The data also show that the J/I/M counselor appeared to be very accessible to the teacher. Eighty-two percent of the teachers responding indicated that they were able to meet with the counselor either informally on the day they needed to see him/her or could schedule same-day appointments. Additionally, 91 percent of the J/I/M principals said that they were either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the quality of their guidance and counseling staff; and 65 percent of the teachers rated their professional working relationship with counselors as "very positive."

However, some suggestions were offered regarding changes in time allocation which were seen as being potentially beneficial. Exhibit 2.25 summarizes differences in the perceptions of counselors, principals, and teachers with respect to (1) the percentage of time they thought counselors spent performing a list of given tasks and (2) the percentage of time they thought counselors should spend performing these tasks. While the discrepancies were fairly limited in number and scope, general trends across the three groups suggested a need for an increase of time spent on student counseling and a decrease in time spent on developing and changing class schedules and paperwork.

An examination of the data collected during observations revealed that there was a large amount of variation in some of the activities counselors perform from school to school (Exhibit 2.26). At the J/I/M level, the greatest variation occurred in the proportion of time counselors spent in conferences (12-52%).

Consumer Perspectives

Parental awareness and use of guidance was considerably higher at the J/I/M level than the elementary level. Sixty-two percent of the parents surveyed knew the name of their child's counselor. Fifty-one percent of the parents indicated that they received information about the school's guidance services, while another 15 percent couldn't remember if they had received any such information. As for the students, practically all of them (88%) knew their counselor's name; and there was only moderate variation from school to school (84-100%).

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EXHIBIT 2.18

Percentage of Time J/I/M Counselors
Spent Performing Counseling Activities*

	Full-time (N=23)	Half-time (N=2)	All (N=25)
INDIVIDUAL STUDENT COUNSELING			
Academic	4	1	4
Develop class schedules	1	—	1
Change class schedules	2	1	2
College/career awareness/ planning/selection	2	1	2
College/career application	**	1	**
Personal/social	8	9	9
Other	1	13	2
TOTAL	17	26	20
GROUP STUDENT COUNSELING			
Academic	1	2	1
Develop class schedules	1	1	1
Change class schedules	1	1	1
College/career awareness/ planning/selection	1	1	1
College/career application	**	1	**
Personal/social	3	1	3
Other	2	—	2
TOTAL	10	5	9
TOTAL COUNSELING TIME	27	31	29

* Based on counselor log data.
**Less than .5 percent.

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EXHIBIT 2.19

Percentage of Times Various Topics Were Discussed by J/I/M Counselors During Observed Counseling Sessions*

ACADEMIC	
Class level placement (resource/advanced)	3
Test results/how to take tests	4
Arranging remedial help	3
Ways to improve schoolwork/study skills	6
Checking on homework/schoolwork assignments	12
Grades	13
Attendance	5
Career awareness/application/information	4
Transition to next grade	1
Problem-solving/decision-making strategies	1
School environment	2
Credits	**
Graduation	0
Alternative Education Programs	**
PERSONAL/SOCIAL	
Drug use and abuse	1
Health/medication	2
Behavior/discipline	7
Mediation between student/parent	**
Mediation between student/teacher	6
Social skills/adjustment/improvement	7
Coping with physical/emotional concerns	3
Parental marital problem	**
Peer relationships	5
Climate at home	4
Student concerns about upcoming conference	0
Student interests/hobbies	5
CLASS SCHEDULING	
Explaining schedule change forms	2
Making class schedule changes	16
Reviewing class schedule	37
Describing master schedule	2
Describing school/class/teacher	2
Developing class schedule	3
MISCELLANEOUS	
Late opening schedule	**
Scheduling parent and/or student meeting	47
Rescheduling parent and/or student meeting	27
Extracurricular activities	2
Supplies/form requests	7
General information (bus schedule, lost keys)	4
TOTAL NUMBER OF COUNSELING SESSIONS OBSERVED	255

* Columns do not add to 100 percent because more than one topic may have been discussed during a counseling session.

** Less than 1 percent.

EXHIBIT 2.20

Percentage of Time Counselors Spent in Various Types of Conferences*

	Full-time (N=23)	Half-time (N=2)	All (N=25)
Parent(s) alone or with teacher	12	4	11
Teacher(s)	6	4	6
Student with teacher and/or parent	4	—	4
School administrators	3	4	3
Guidance Advisory Committee	1	—	3
Educational Management Team	1	—	1
Admissions, Review, and Dismissal Committee	2	13	3
Community Agencies	1	—	1
Other	4	1	4
Total	34	26	34

*Based on counselor log data.

EXHIBIT 2.21

Percentage of Time J/I/M Counselors Spent on Various Types of Paperwork*

	Full-time (N=23)	Half-time (N=2)	All (N=25)
Scheduling	3	6	3
EMT/ARD meetings	2	7	2
Writing reference letters	1	1	1
Updating student files/records/ notes/grades	4	5	4
Writing notes/memos to teachers	5	7	5
Writing letters/memos to parents	3	1	3
Other	4	4	4
Total	21	30	22

*Based on counselor log data.

EXHIBIT 2.22

Percentage of J/I/M Counselors Expressing Various Levels of Satisfaction with the Delivery of Guidance Services*

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Academic Counseling (N=49)	45	49	6	0
Personal Counseling (N=49)	44	39	14	2
Developing Class Schedule (N=45)	27	47	20	6
Changing Class Schedule (N=45)	22	46	20	12
Career/College Awareness (N=44)	29	52	14	5
Parent Consultation (N=48)	46	48	6	0
Parent Counseling (N=40)	18	42	35	5
Family Counseling (N=36)	11	47	36	6
Teacher Consultation (N=47)	43	51	6	0
Serving in EMT, SARD, AARD (N=47)	32	55	13	2
Paperwork (other than scheduling) (N=45)	11	42	34	13
Average	29	47	19	5

*Based on counselor questionnaire data. The above figures represent the weighted average satisfaction level of J/I/M resource and regular counselors.

EXHIBIT 2.23

Percentage of J/I/M Principals Expressing Some Level of Satisfaction with the Delivery of Guidance Services*
(N=11)

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Academic Counseling	45	46	9	0
Personal Counseling	55	45	0	0
Developing Class Schedule	67	33	0	0
Changing Class Schedule	36	64	0	0
Career/College Awareness	27	73	0	0
Parent Consultation	45	55	0	0
Parent Counseling	20	80	0	0
Family Counseling	22	78	0	0
Teacher Consultation	45	55	0	0
Serving in EMT, SARD, AARD	80	20	0	0
Average	44	55	1	0

*Based on principal interview data.

EXHIBIT 2.24

Percentage of J/I/M Teachers Expressing Various Levels of Satisfaction with the Delivery of Guidance Services*

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Academic Counseling (N=268)	23	56	18	3
Personal Counseling (N=140)	24	55	17	3
Developing Class Schedule (N=254)	19	57	18	6
Changing Class Schedule (N=262)	18	53	24	5
Career/College Awareness (N=182)	14	68	14	4
Parent Consultation (N=263)	25	58	14	3
Parent Counseling (N=183)	22	63	13	2
Family Counseling (N=80)	20	60	19	1
Teacher Consultation (N=264)	25	54	17	4
Serving in EMT, SARD, ARD (251)	26	57	13	4
Average	22	58	16	4

*Based on teacher questionnaire data.

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EXHIBIT 2.25

Percentage of Time J/I/M Counselors, Principals, and Teachers Believe that Counselors Spend and Should Spend on Various Guidance Tasks*

	COUNSELORS (N=49)			PRINCIPALS (N=11)			TEACHERS (N=257)		
	Time Spent	Time Should be Spent	Difference	Time Spent	Time Should be Spent	Difference	Time Spent	Time Should be Spent	Difference
Student Counseling	32	38	+ 6[b]	30	34	+ 4[b]	22	33	+11[a]
College/Career Counseling	5	6	+ 1	5	6	+ 1	3	4	+ 1
Develop/Change Class Schedules	17	7	-10[a]	14	12	- 2[c]	15	10	- 5[a]
Parent Consultation/ Counseling	15	16	+ 1[d]	19	18	- 1[e]	10	16	+ 6[a]
Teacher Consultation	11	- 1	- 2	10	11	+ 1	6	8	+ 2[a]
EMTs, SARDs, AARDs	7	5	- 3	8	9	+ 1[a]	6	6	0
Paperwork	8	3	- 5[a]	11	9	- 2	8	4	- 4[a]
Average Absolute Difference			4.3			1.7			4.1

*Based on counselor questionnaire, principal interview, and teacher questionnaire data.

a. Significant ($p < .05$).
b. Significant ($p < .05$) for only personal/social counseling, not academic counseling.
c. Significant ($p < .05$) for only changing class schedules, not for developing schedules.
d. Significant ($p < .05$) for only family counseling, not parent consultation or counseling.
e. Significant ($p < .05$) for less parent consultation and more family counseling.

EXHIBIT 2.26

Individual J/I/M Counselor Profiles of How Time Is Spent*

	Full-time						Half-time		Range
Counselor ID:	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
Individual Student Counseling	8	12	14	21	9	23	18	11	8-23
Group Student Counseling	22	1	3	5	18	4	13	0	0-22
Conferences	35	35	52	12	39	14	33	34	12-52
Paperwork	12	18	10	2	10	8	15	13	2-18
Miscellaneous Guidance Tasks	2	12	6	17	4	6	5	30	2-30
Management/Organization	7	12	7	7	14	5	7	7	5-14
Adjunct Duties	11	0	7	20	0	10	7	0	0-20
Travel	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0- 4
Nonwork activities	3	10	1	16	3	11	2	5	1-16

*Based on counselor observation data.

Of the parents surveyed, 55 percent had contacted the counselor. The most frequent reasons that these contacts were made were to discuss the child's test scores or grades, learning problems, and personal problems (Exhibit 2.27).

The majority of J/I/M parents surveyed (60%) rated the overall guidance and counseling services available in their child's school (Exhibit 2.28) as either "excellent" or "good." Of the parents who actually contacted the counselor during the school year, 81 percent indicated that they were either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the information they received from the counselor (Exhibit 2.29).

Student contact with counselors was also higher at the J/I/M than at the elementary level; 66 percent indicated that they met individually with a counselor for reasons other than a simple class schedule change. However, the variation across JIM schools on this measure ranged from 37 percent to 81 percent. Of all the topics about which students saw counselors, the highest percentage of students saw a counselor about program planning (e.g., developing four-year plans, discussing class selections; Exhibit 2.30). Program planning was also the most frequently discussed topic during sessions in small groups and in the classroom (Exhibit 2.31). (For a more detailed description of student-counselor meetings, see Appendix B.)

With respect to student satisfaction, the majority of students appeared to be satisfied with their meetings with counselors. Depending on the topic of their meeting, 69 to 77 percent of the students indicated that they would recommend their counselor to their best friend (Exhibit 2.32). Also depending on the topic of their meeting, 57 to 72 percent of the students graded the usefulness of their meetings with the counselor with either an "A" or "B" (Exhibit 2.33). Depending on the topic of their meeting, 23 to 37 percent of the students indicated that their behavior or feelings changed after they met with a counselor. Some of the behavioral and attitudinal changes that occurred in students after meetings with a counselor included doing all their homework, working harder, having a better attitude, and having more confidence.

Sixty-five percent of the J/I/M students who did not see a counselor indicated that they simply had no problem to discuss. Twenty-four percent of the students indicated that they did not feel comfortable talking to the counselor, while 18 percent indicted that they did not think the counselor could help them (Exhibit 2.34).

Analyses indicated some significant differences with regard to the types of students who did and did not see a counselor at the J/I/M level (Exhibit 2.35). Specifically:

- There was a tendency for a higher percentage of students with lower grades to see a counselor than students with higher grades.
- There were statistically significant differences with respect to race in the percentage of students who saw a counselor about school performance. A relatively small percentage of Asians saw the counselor, while a large percentage of Hispanics saw the counselor.

EXHIBIT 2.27

Percentage of Parents of J/I/M Students Who Indicated Various Reasons for Contacting Counselors*
(N=543)

Reasons	Percentage
Learning problems	33
Behavior problems	21
Test scores/grades	41
Personal problems	30
Parent education program	8
Classes/scheduling	26
Child Adjustment	9
Problems with teachers	3
Administrative information	3

*Based on parent interview data.

EXHIBIT 2.28

Percentage of Parents of J/I/M Students Indicating Various Ratings of Guidance Counseling Services* (N=935)

Excellent	Good	Adequate	Fair	Poor
18	42	25	9	6

*Based on parent interview data.

EXHIBIT 2.29

Percentage of Parents of J/I/M Students Expressing Various Levels of Satisfaction with Information Received from Counselors* (N=527)

Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
41	40	6	8	5

*Based on parent interview data.

EXHIBIT 2.30

Percentage of J/I/M Students Who Saw a Counselor or Career Information Technician for Various Reasons* (N=1011)

Program Planning**	42
School Performance	28
Personal/Social Topics	24
College	8
Career/Job Counselor	10
Career/Job Career Information Technician	-

* Based on student questionnaire data.
**Excludes meetings for simple schedule changes.

EXHIBIT 2.31

Percentage of J/I/M Students That Met with a Counselor in a Small Group or Class Setting to Discuss Various Topics*

	Small Group		Class Setting	
	N	%	N	%
Program Planning	1008	46	1004	72
School Performance	1002	37	1000	43
Personal/Social	1005	28	999	25
College	1001	13	999	19
Career/Job	998	19	998	30

*Based on student questionnaire data.

EXHIBIT 2.32

Percentage of J/I/M Students Who Indicated that They Would Recommend Guidance Services to Their Best Friend*

Program Planning (N=408)	74
School Performance (N=270)	69
Personal/Social (N=235)	69
College (N=73)	77
Career/Job (N=80)	77
Average	73

*Based on student questionnaire data.

EXHIBIT 2.33

Percentage of J/I/M Students Who Assigned Various Letter Grades to the Usefulness of Their Meetings with a Counselor*

	A	B	C	D	E
Program Planning (N=405)	21	45	25	5	4
School Performance (N=269)	20	37	26	10	6
Personal/Social (N=235)	23	37	23	9	6
College (N=77)	27	40	21	6	5
Career/Job (N=77)	21	51	18	6	4
Average	23	42	23	7	5

*Based on student questionnaire data.

EXHIBIT 2.34

Percentage of J/I/M Students Indicating Various Reasons for Not Seeing a Counselor*
(N=330)

	Percentage
Had no problem to discuss with the counselor	65
Didn't feel comfortable talking to the counselor	24
Preferred to talk to someone else	10
Did not know who the counselor was	3
Did not know what the counselor did	3
Did not think counselor could help	18
Could not talk to the counselor without others knowing about it	3
Counselor was always too busy	6
I was afraid the counselor would tell someone else what I had said	5

*Based on student questionnaire data.

EXHIBIT 2.35

Characteristics of J/I/M Students Who Saw Counselors for Various Reasons*

Characteristics	All Students (N=617)	Program Planning (N=425)	School Performance (N=281)	Personal/ Social (N=244)	College (N=81)	Job (N=86)
Grade						
7	62	39	25	24	4 **	6
8	70	47	31	25	13	12
9	68	41	31	22	9	6
Grades Earned						
A	49 ****	39	9 ***	19 ****	7	4 ****
A-B	61	43	17	21	6	8
B	63	45	29	23	10	12
B-C	69	38	37	25	8	8
C	82	47	40	29	7	10
C-D	75	43	46	32	11	14
D-E	83	57	39	39	22	—
Sex						
Male	65	40	32 **	22	9	10
Female	65	44	24	27	7	7
Race						
Asian	50	37	17 **	21	10	5
Black	72	40	34	30	9	12
Hispanic	72	47	42	22	17	17
White	67	44	28	24	7	8
Likelihood of Attending College Reported by Students						
75-100%	63	42	24	23	8	7
50-74%	70	37	41	26	5	13
Less than 50	72	53	32	32	17	11
May Not Graduate HS	—	60	20	60	-	-

* Based on student questionnaire data.

** Indicates statistically significant differences in categories ($p < .05$).

*** Indicates statistically significant differences in categories ($p < .05$) and statistically significant correlation ($p < .05$).

****Indicates only correlational significance ($p < .05$).

DESCRIPTION OF THE GUIDANCE FUNCTION AS PERFORMED IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

Services Delivered

Figure 3 illustrates that, like the elementary and J/I/M counselors, senior high counselors spent the majority of their time in three types of activities: student counseling (42%), conferences (22%), and paperwork (17%). However at this level, counseling was more likely to be done on an individual rather than group basis, with a large portion of counseling time spent counseling students about developing class schedules (15%) rather than dealing with personal social issues (Exhibit 2.36). And, data collected at the beginning of the second semester showed senior high counselors spent 17 percent of their time counseling students about schedule changes (Exhibit 2.37). As at the other school levels, senior high counselors were required to counsel students on a wide range of topics (Exhibit 2.38).

Although the majority of staff rated the guidance and counseling services in the senior high schools as satisfactory (approximately 64% across the three respondent groups), the picture at the senior high level was less positive than those for the elementary and J/I/M levels (Figure 4 and Exhibits 2.39 through 3.41). Fewer respondents indicated they were very satisfied, and there was a sharp decrease in the percentage of principals and teachers who indicated they were satisfied. Only 60 percent of the principals indicated that they were either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the quality of their guidance and counseling staff, and only 44 percent of the teachers rated their professional working relationship with counselors as "very positive." Nonetheless, teachers continued to report that counselors were accessible. Seventy-seven percent of the teachers reported that they were able to meet informally or schedule a meeting with a counselor on the same day they needed consultation.

Examination of data concerning staff perceptions of how counselors do and should spend their time presents a stronger picture of dissatisfaction with the senior high counseling program. Counselors, principals, and teachers indicated many and, in some instances, quite large differences between their perceptions of how the senior high counselors apportion their time and how they should apportion their time among their various responsibilities. Exhibit 2.42 illustrates that there were statistically significant discrepancies for most activities to which counselors, principals, and teachers responded. In general, counselors, principals, and teachers wanted an increase in the time counselors spend on student counseling and parent/family consultation/counseling and a decrease in the time they spend on scheduling and paperwork.

As was found at the elementary and J/I/M levels, counselors' distribution of time among various responsibilities varied widely from one school to another (Exhibit 2.43). In general, the greatest variation occurred in the proportion of time spent in individual student counseling (14-57%), and conferences (14-49%).

Consumer Perspectives

Parental awareness and use of counseling services at the senior high level was similar to that found at the J/I/M level. Surveys of parents indicated

Figure 3

Percentage of Time Senior High Counselors Spent Performing Various Tasks as Reported on Counselor Logs

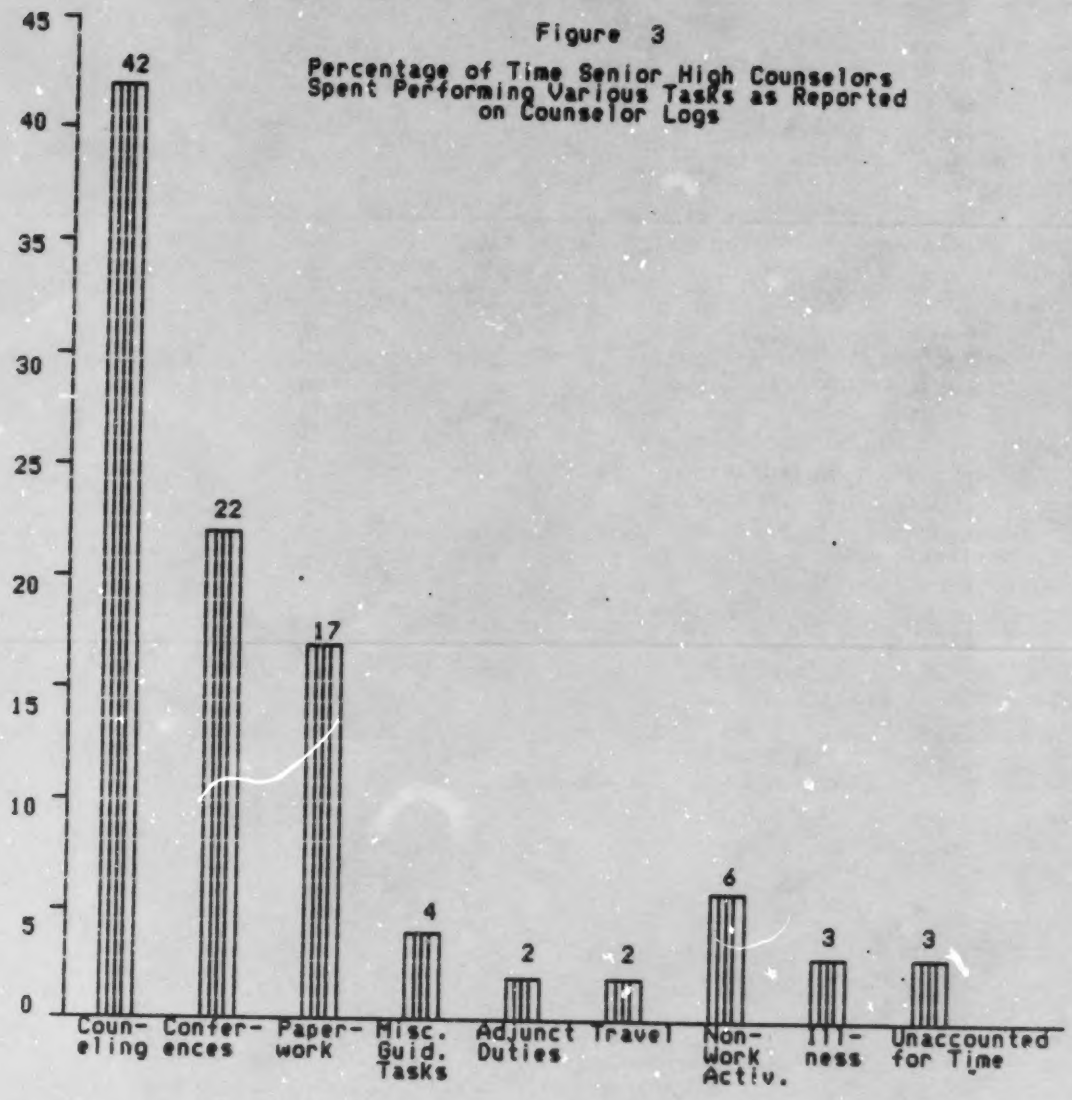

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EXHIBIT 2.36

Percentage of Time Senior High Counselors Spent Performing Counseling Activities*

	Full-time (N=41)	Half-time (N=3)	All (N=44)
INDIVIDUAL STUDENT COUNSELING			
Academic	5	11	6
Develop class schedules	5	7	6
Change class schedules	2	1	2
College/career awareness/ planning/selection	3	3	3
College/career application	2	2	2
Personal/social	6	4	7
Other	1	—	1
TOTAL	24	28	27
GROUP STUDENT COUNSELING			
Academic	2	8	3
Develop class schedules	8	10	9
Change class schedules	1	—	1
College/career awareness/ planning/selection	3	3	3
College/career application	1	—	1
Personal/social	1	—	1
Other	1	—	1
TOTAL	17	21	20
TOTAL COUNSELING TIME	41	49	47

*Based on counselor log data.

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EXHIBIT 2.37

Percentage of Time Senior High School Counselors Spent Performing Counseling Activities*

	Full-time (N=5)	Half-time (N=3)	All (N=8)
INDIVIDUAL STUDENT COUNSELING			
Academic	6	10	7
Develop class schedules	1	—	1
Change class schedules	17	14	16
College/career awareness/ planning/selection	1	1	1
College/career application	1	1	1
Personal/social	1	1	1
Other	2	—	2
Total	29	27	29
GROUP STUDENT COUNSELING			
Academic	**	3	1
Develop class schedules	2	—	1
Change class schedules	1	—	**
College/career awareness/ planning/selection	**	—	**
College/career application	—	—	—
Personal/social	—	—	—
Other	**	—	**
Total	3	3	3
TOTAL COUNSELING TIME	31	30	31

* Based on counselor observation data.
**Less than .5 percent.

EXHIBIT 2.38

Percentage of Times Various Topics Were Discussed by Senior High Counselors During Observed Counseling Sessions*

ACADEMIC	
Class level placement (resource/advanced)	3
Test results/how to take tests	3
Arranging remedial help	3
Ways to improve schoolwork/study skills	3
Checking on homework/schoolwork assignments	1
Grades	13
Attendance	3
Career awareness/application/information	10
Transition to next grade	0
Problem-solving/decision-making strategies	0
School environment	**
Credits	4
Graduation	3
Alternative Education Programs	6
PERSONAL/SOCIAL	
Drug use and abuse	0
Health/medication	1
Behavior/discipline	2
Mediation between student/parent	2
Mediation between student/teacher	3
Social skills/adjustment/improvement	1
Coping with physical/emotional concerns	2
Parental marital problem	0
Peer relationships	0
Climate at home	1
Student concerns about upcoming conference	1
Student interests/hobbies	2
CLASS SCHEDULING	
Explaining schedule change forms	**
Making class schedule changes	57
Reviewing class schedule	8
Describing master schedule	4
Describing school/class/teacher	**
Developing class schedule	7
MISCELLANEOUS	
Late opening schedule	0
Scheduling parent and/or student meeting	4
Rescheduling parent and/or student meeting	1
Extracurricular activities	3
Supplies/form requests	12
General information (bus schedule, lost keys)	3
TOTAL NUMBER OF COUNSELING SESSIONS OBSERVED	386

* Columns do not add to 100 percent because more than one topic may have been discussed during a counseling session.

** Less than 1 percent.

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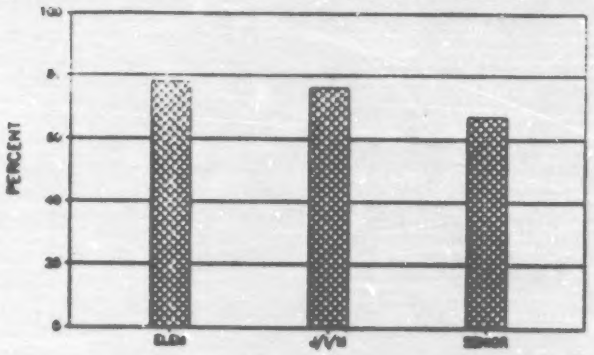
FIGURE 4

COMPARISON OF SATISFACTION LEVELS ACROSS SCHOOL LEVELS

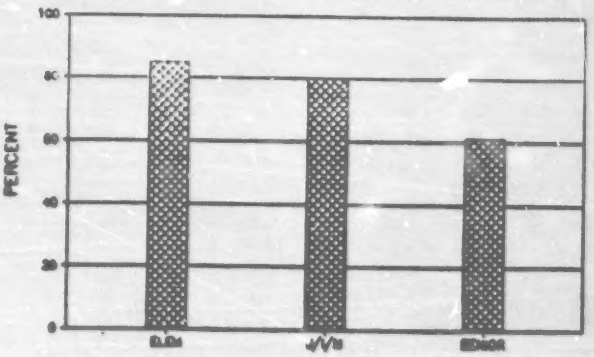
COUNSELORS

SATISFACTION LEVEL WITH GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING SERVICES



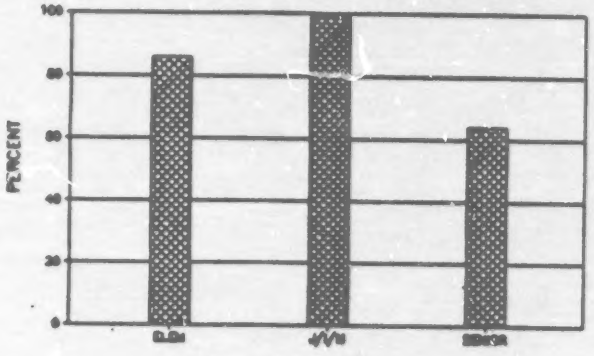
TEACHERS

SATISFACTION LEVEL WITH GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING SERVICES



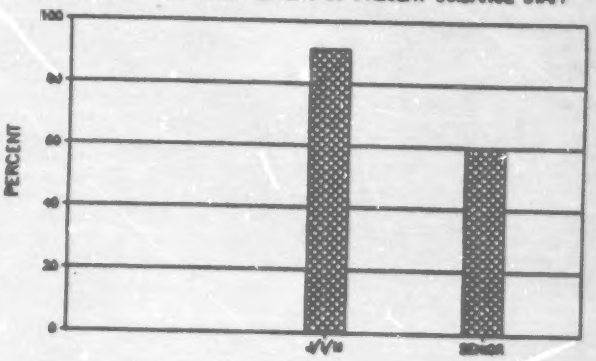
PRINCIPALS

SATISFACTION LEVEL WITH GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING SERVICES



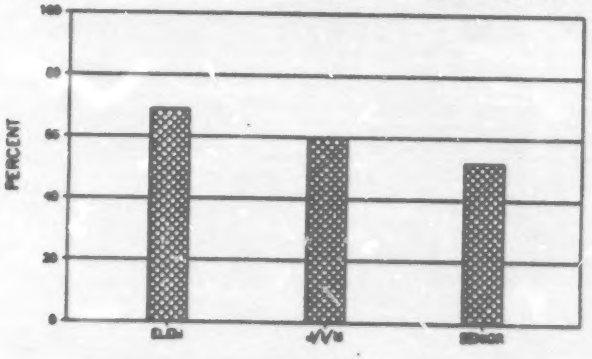
PRINCIPALS

SATISFACTION LEVEL WITH QUALITY OF PRESENT GUIDANCE STAFF



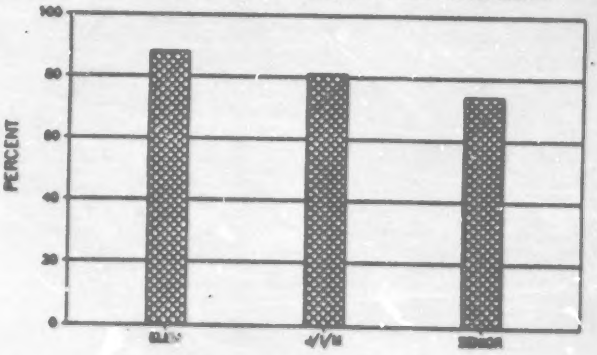
PARENTS

SATISFACTION LEVEL WITH GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING SERVICES



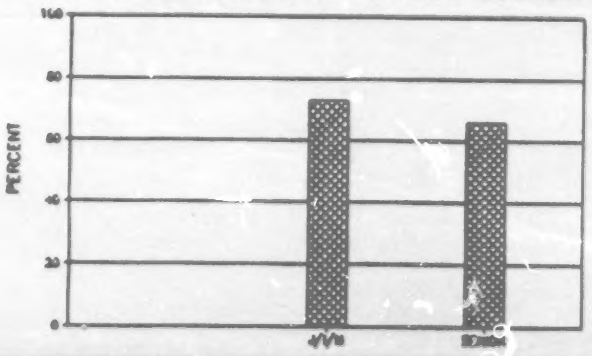
PARENTS

SATISFACTION LEVEL WITH INFORMATION FROM COUNSELORS



STUDENTS

PERCENTAGE STUDENTS RECOMMENDING SERVICES TO BEST FRIEND



STUDENTS

PERCENT ASSIGNING GRADES OF "A" OR "B" TO GUIDANCE SERVICES

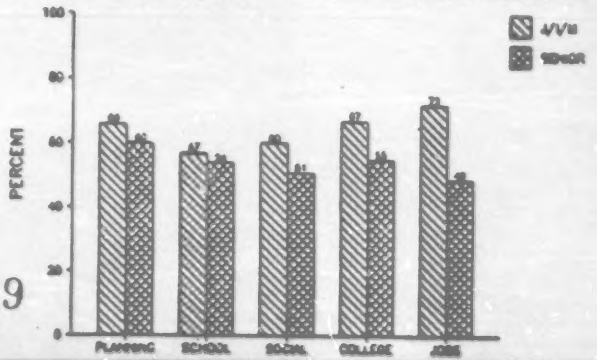


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EXHIBIT 2.39

Percentage of Senior High Counselors Expressing Some Level of Satisfaction with the Delivery of Guidance Services*

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
	Percentage			
Academic Counseling (N=80)	39	47	12	2
Personal Counseling (N=79)	18	56	20	6
Developing Class Schedule (N=77)	20	47	18	15
Changing Class Schedule (N=78)	14	17	32	37
Career/College Awareness (N=78)	27	54	18	1
Parent				
Parent Counseling (N=70)	19	43	24	14
Family Counseling (N=69)	10	44	30	16
Teacher Consultation (N=78)	19	68	11	2
Serving in EMT, SARD, AARD (N=77)	17	57	18	8
Paperwork (other than scheduling) (N=76)	11	29	34	26
Average	20	47	21	12

*Based on counselor questionnaire data. The above figures represent the weighted average satisfaction level of senior high resource and regular counselors.

EXHIBIT 2.40

Percentage of Senior High Principals Expressing Some Level of Satisfaction With the Delivery of Guidance Services*
(N=10)

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Academic Counseling	20	50	20	10
Personal Counseling	10	60	20	10
Developing Class Schedule	20	60	10	10
Changing Class Schedule	20	40	30	10
Career/College Awareness	30	40	20	10
Parent Consultation	0	50	40	10
Parent Counseling	0	50	33	17
Family Counseling	20	40	40	0
Teacher Consultation	0	56	44	0
Serving in EMT, SARD, AARD	20	50	20	10
Average	14	50	28	8

*Based on principal interview data.

EXHIBIT 2.41

Percentage of Senior High Teachers
Expressing Some Level of Satisfaction
With the Delivery of Guidance Services*

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Academic Counseling (N=373)	5	53	34	8
Personal Counseling (N=348)	4	59	26	11
Developing Class Schedule (N=372)	6	51	28	15
Changing Class Schedule (N=376)	6	36	36	22
Career/College Awareness (N=351)	10	61	21	8
Parent Consultation (N=359)	7	55	31	7
Parent Counseling (N=235)	6	60	24	10
Family Counseling (N=192)	5	58	25	12
Teacher Consultation (N=355)	6	46	33	15
Serving in EMH, SARD, AARD (N=331	7	69	16	8
Average	6	55	27	12

*Based on teacher questionnaire data.

EXHIBIT 2.42

Percentage of Time Senior High Counselors, Principals, and Teachers Believe that Counselors Spend and Should Spend on Various Guidance Tasks*

	COUNSELORS (N=81)			PRINCIPALS (N=10)			TEACHERS (N=237)		
	% Time Spent	% Time Should be Spent	Difference	% Time Spent	% Time Should be Spent	Difference	% Time Spent	% Time Should be Spent	Difference
Student Counseling	23	36	+13[a]	32	37	+ 5	23	35	+12[a]
College/Career Counseling	21	17	- 4[a]	8	15	+ 7[a]	8	10	+ 2[a]
Develop/Change Class Schedules	28	11	-17[a]	28	15	-13[b]	34	16	-18[a]
Parent Counsultation/ Counseling	9	14	+ 5[c]	9	15	+ 6[d]	12	17	+ 5[a]
Teacher Consultation	6	7	+ 1[a]	8	9	+ 1	5	10	+ 5[a]
EMT's, SARD's, AARD's	4	4	—	4	4	—	6	7	+ 1[a]
Paperwork	10	5	- 5[a]	9	4	- 5[a]	11	5	- 6[a]
Average Absolute Difference			6.6			5.3			7

*Based on Counselor Questionnaire, Principal Interviews, and Teacher Questionnaire data.

a. Significant ($p < .05$)
b. Significant ($p < .05$) for schedule changes only.
c. Significant ($p < .05$) for parent/family counseling, not parent consultation.
d. Significant ($p < .05$) for parent counseling and consultation, not for family counseling.

EXHIBIT 2.43

Percentage of Time Individual Senior High Counselor Spend on Various Tasks*

	Full-time					Split-time**			Half-time		Range
Counselor ID:	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	
Individual Student Counseling	22	14	57	21	33	14	25	17	26	30	14-57
Group Student Counseling	1	7	0	2	3	19	26	2	0	6	0-26
Conferences	22	28	17	35	27	27	14	47	49	31	14-49
Paperwork	27	30	13	4	12	10	3	8	12	17	3-30
Miscellaneous Guidance Tasks	7	5	7	16	3	4	9	6	5	7	3-16
Management/Organization	5	13	5	10	9	16	15	10	6	9	5-16
Adjunct Duties	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	0- 2
Travel	0	0	1	0	0	2	4	4	0	0	0- 4
Non-work activ'ties	16	3	0	12	14	6	7	3	2	1	0-16

*Based on Counselor Observation data.
**These are data on counslors assigned to two schools: one a senior high and one a J/I/M school.

that 61 percent of the senior high parents surveyed knew the name of their child's counselor. Fifty-one percent of the parents indicated that they received information about the school's guidance services, while another 17 percent indicated that they couldn't remember if they had received any such information.

Of the parents surveyed, 54 percent had contacted the counselor. The most frequent reasons for these contacts were to discuss the child's test scores or grades, classes/scheduling, and learning problems (Exhibit 2.44).

Parent satisfaction, like staff satisfaction, was lowest at the senior high level (Figure 4, p. 51). Slightly more than half (52%) of all the senior high parents surveyed rated the overall guidance/counseling services available in their child's school as either "excellent" or "good" (Exhibit 2.45). Of those parents who actually contacted the counselor during the school year, 74 percent indicated that they were either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the information they received (Exhibit 2.46).

Parents were also asked to rate how satisfied they were with specific services that their child used. Sixty percent or more parents indicated some level of satisfaction with all but two of the guidance/counseling services about which they were asked: helping the student develop study skills (49%) and helping the student decide what to do after graduation (56%) (Exhibit 2.47). Additionally, the data indicated that the majority of parents (69%) whose children received counseling on applying to college were either "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the guidance and counseling the child received.

Of the senior high students surveyed, practically all students (98%) indicated that they knew their counselor's name. Furthermore, there was little variation across schools (93-100%) on this measure. Student-counselor contact was also reported to be high. Seventy-seven percent of the students indicated that they met with the counselor individually for some reason other than a simple schedule change. The most frequent reason for these meetings was to discuss planning academic programs (Exhibit 2.48). This included such topics as developing a class schedule for the school year, developing/reviewing four-year plans, having the school routine explained, and discussing graduation requirements/credits for classes. Program planning was also the most frequently discuss topic during sessions in small groups and in the classroom (Exhibit 2.49). (See Appendix B for more detailed information on student-counselor meetings.)

The majority of students were satisfied with the counseling they had received, but ratings were lower than those given at the elementary or J/I/M levels (Figure 4, p. 51). Based on their meetings with the counselor and/or the career information technician, 63 percent or more of the senior high students indicated that they would recommend that their best friend meet with their counselor or the career information technician (Exhibit 2.50). Forty-nine to 60 percent of the students, depending on the topic of their meetings, graded the usefulness of their meetings with letter grades of either "A" or "B"; while 65 percent of the students who saw the career information technician about jobs graded the usefulness of those talks with letter grades of "A" or "B" (Exhibit 2.51). Additionally, between 17 and 33 percent of the students who saw a counselor for various reasons indicated that they changed their behavior or attitude after they met with a

EXHIBIT 2.44

Percentage of Parents of Senior High Students
Who Indicated Various Reasons
Why They Contacted Counselors*
(N=786)

Reasons	Percentage
Learning problems	27
Behavior problems	16
Test scores/grades	40
Personal problems	16
Parent education program	2
Classes/scheduling	36
Child adjustment	7
Problems with teachers	5
Administrative information	4
College information	18
Job information	8

*Based on parent intervew data.

EXHIBIT 2.45

Percentage of Parents of Senior High Students
Who Assigned Various Rating to the Guidance Counseling Services*
(N=1369)

Excellent	Good	Adequate	Fair	Poor
17	35	24	15	10

*Based on parent interview data.

EXHIBIT 2.46

Percentage of Parents of Senior High Students
Expressing Various Levels of Satisfaction With
Information Received From Counselors*
(N=767)

Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
40	34	9	10	8

*Based on parent interview data.

EXHIBIT 2.47

Percentage of Parents of Senior High Students Expressing Various Levels Satisfaction With the Delivery of Guidance Counseling Services*

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither Sat. nor Dissatis.	Dissatis.	Very Dissatisfied
Selecting Classes (N=1267)	25	48	10	13	4
Understanding Test Scores (N=943)	14	59	13	11	3
Developing Study Skills (N=886)	9	40	15	27	8
Identifying Abilities/ Interests (N=975)	11	50	14	19	5
Learning About Jobs (N=740)	15	48	12	19	6
Dealing with Learning Problems (N=592)	14	47	11	21	8
Dealing with School-Related Personal Problems (N=549)	17	55	8	16	5
Dealing with Family-Related Personal Problems (N=303)	17	62	7	11	4
Dealing with Peer-Related Personal Problems (N=373)	15	59	9	13	4
What To Do After School (N=836)	14	42	17	19	7
Learning About Graduation Requirements (N=1068)	20	64	7	6	2
Applying to Colleges (N=639)	18	51	10	15	6
Applying for Jobs (N=534)	16	46	11	20	7
Average	16	52	11	16	5

*Based on parent interview data.

EXHIBIT 2.48

Percentage of Senior High Students Who Saw the Counselor or the Career Information Technician for Various Reasons (N=805)

	Senior High
Program Planning*	63
School Performance	23
Personal/Social Topics	12
College	23
Career/Job-Counselor	6
Career/Job-Career Information Technician	11

*Based on student questionnaire data; excludes meetings for simple schedule changes.

EXHIBIT 2.49

Percentage of Senior High Students That Met with a Counselor in a Small Group or Class Setting to Discuss Various Topics*

Topic	Small Group		Class Setting	
	N	%	N	%
Program Planning	801	61	803	72
School Performance	798	29	799	25
Personal/Social	802	14	801	11
College	799	36	802	46
Career/Job	802	18	801	27

*Based on student questionnaire data.

EXHIBIT 2.50

Percentage of Senior High Students Who Indicated That They Would Recommend Guidance Services to Their Best Friend*

Provider of Services	Percentage Students Recommending Guidance Counseling Services to Best Friend
GUIDANCE COUNSELORS	
Program Planning (N=495)	73
School Performance (N=178)	66
Personal/Social (N=95)	60
College (N=169)	71
Career/Job (N=50)	64
Average	66
CAREER INFORMATION TECHNICIAN	
Career/Job* (N=89)	63

*Based on student questionnaire data.

EXHIBIT 2.51

Percentage of Senior High Students Who Assigned Various Letter Grades to the Usefulness of Their Meetings With the Counselor and the Career Information Teachers*

Provider of Guidance Services	Grade Given to Guidance Counseling Services				
	A	B	C	D	E
GUIDANCE COUNSELOR					
Program Planning (N=495)	15	45	29	7	3
School Performance (N=179)	20	34	34	7	6
Personal/Social (N=95)	17	34	33	8	8
College (N=169)	18	37	36	7	3
Career/Job (N=49)	12	37	39	6	6
Average	17	37	34	7	5
CAREER INFORMATION TECHNICIAN					
Career/Job (N=86)	27	38	26	5	5

*Based on student questionnaire data.

counselor. Some of these changes included trying to communicate better with teachers, putting forth more effort on school work, improving study habits, becoming more disciplined, dealing with feelings, and making specific college plans.

Fifty-two percent of the senior high students who did not see the counselor indicated that it was because they had no problem to discuss with the counselor. Of the students offering other reasons for not seeing a counselor concerning a problem, 25 percent doubted that the counselor could help them; while 20 percent did not feel comfortable talking to the counselor, and 19 percent thought the counselor was always too busy (Exhibit 2.52).

Analyses of student reports showed that students who sought counseling differed in some significant ways from those who did not (Exhibit 2.53):

- Students with low letter grades met with the counselors about school performance and personal/social topics more than students with higher grades. This relationship is significant for students who saw counselors about school performance.

- In contrast, students with higher letter grades were more likely to have met with the counselor to discuss colleges.

- There were statistically significant differences with respect to race in the percentage of students who saw a counselor about colleges. Blacks had the highest percentage of students among racial groups who saw a counselor to discuss information about colleges.

- There were also statistically significant differences with respect to sex in the percentage of students who saw a counselor about personal/social and college concerns. More females than males saw counselors about these topics.

Student Use of Private Counselors

Of additional interest at the senior high level was the extent to which MCPS parents were employing private counselors to help their children apply to colleges. Information to address this concern was collected by asking parents of eleventh and twelfth graders if they sought such help.

The data show that only 8 percent of these parents indicated that they sought college related counseling for their children from a private counselor. Of these parents, 55 percent indicated that they or their child had experienced some problems with the school counselor. These problems included parents feeling that they were not getting enough information from the school counselor; parents questioning the school counselor's qualifications; the counselor not following through on decisions or returning phone calls; parents' perception that since the counselor had so many things to do, the counselor would not be able to give their child the kind of help he/she needed; and the child not getting along with the school counselor.

EXHIBIT 2.52

Percentage of Senior High School Students Who Gave Various Reasons For Not Seeing a Counselor*
(N=174)

Had no problem to discuss with the counselor	52
Didn't feel comfortable talking to the counselor	20
Preferred to talk to someone else	17
Did not know who the counselor was	--
Did not know what the counselor did	3
Did not think counselor could help	25
Could not talk to the counselor without others knowing about it	5
Counselor was always too busy	19
I was afraid the counselor would tell someone else what I had said	9

*Based on student questionnaires.

EXHIBIT 2.53

Characteristics of Senior High Students Who Saw Counselors and/or the Career Information Technician (CIT) for Various Reasons

Characteristic	All Students (N=617	Program Planning (N=509)	School Performance (N=181)	Personal/ Social (N=96)	College (N=183)	Job Counselor (N=50)	Job CIT (N=91)
Grade 9	70	58	23	12	8 *	8	14
10	77	66	24	14	15	6	9
11	81	64	18	10	43	6	12
Grades Earned A	74	63	8 **	8 *	37 **	2 *	15
A-B	72	64	11	8	19	5	6
B	80	63	20	9	31	2	9
B-C	81	69	22	12	23	7	14
C	75	58	36	20	20	10	13
C-D	77	58	36	14	16	11	10
D-E	74	61	39	13	9	4	--
Sex							
Male	76	61	22	10 *	19 *	7	12
Female	78	65	23	14	26	6	11
Race							
Asian	80	72	23	11	25 *	9	18
Black	79	64	32	13	34	10	11
Hispanic	83	80	31	13	26	10	13
White	76	61	20	11	21	5	10
Likelihood of Attending College Reported by Students							
75-100%	76	62	20	11	25	4	11
50-74%	82	67	37	17	21	14	18
Less than 50%	79	70	28	15	6	12	10
May Not Graduate HS	40	.2	0	20	-	-	-

*Based on Student Questionnaire data; figures are the percentage of students who fall into each characteristic.

**Indicates statistically significant differences in categories ($p < .05$).

***Indicates statistically significant differences in categories ($p < .05$) and significant correlation ($p < .05$) between grades earned and percentage of students who saw a counselor about school performance ($r = .97$) and college ($r = -.83$).

Twenty-five percent of the parents indicated that they had other services available to them. These included parents who had friends or colleagues who were counselors or who had children with special learning needs and access to other services because of these needs.

Fourteen percent of the parents indicated that they wanted information on colleges but that they really were not sure what the high school offered. Finally, 4 percent of the parents who employed private counselors indicated that they wanted very specific information about some colleges, such as the religious education available at a college and information on a college's football program.

Employment of private counselors to help with applying to colleges occurred more frequently at some schools than others. Of the ten senior high schools in which the parent interviews were conducted, only three schools had more than 11 percent of the parents employing a private counselor for their child (Exhibit 2.54). Furthermore, when Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) verbal and math scores were added and ranked for the schools in the survey, the schools with the three highest ranks were the three schools with the highest percentage of parents employing private counselors. A somewhat similar relationship was found between the the percentage of parents employing a private counselor and the school's rank order of the percentage of students who took the SAT. The three schools with the highest percentage of parents employing private counselors were within the top four ranked on the percentage of students in the school who took the SAT.

Exhibit 2.55 summarizes the descriptive characteristics of the students in the parent survey who saw private counselors. As can be seen, (1) approximately the same percentage of eleventh and twelfth graders saw private counselors, (2) the percentage of females who saw private counselors is slightly higher than the percentage of males, (3) the percentage of whites seeing private counselors is twice that of the percentage of blacks, and (4) no Asians or Hispanics in this sample saw private counselors.

To summarize, parent data indicated that the employment of private counselors was done by a very small percentage of parents countywide. However, it appeared to occur more frequently in schools where students had high SAT scores and where a high percentage of students took the SAT.

DESCRIPTION OF THE GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING FUNCTION AS PERFORMED IN THE SUPPLEMENTARY CENTERS

Interviews with seven of the nine supplementary principals/directors without counselors were conducted to determine how guidance and counseling services were delivered in their centers. The results of these interviews indicated the following:

- Guidance/counseling services (such as student academic/vocational/behavioral counseling, parent counseling, etc.) were reportedly available and were provided by staff in various positions, e.g., teacher advisors, alternative structure teachers, program assistants, therapists, social workers, child development specialists, or work/study coordinators. In some instances, principals or assistant principals provided these same services.

EXHIBIT 2.54

Comparison of Percentage of Parents Employing Private Counselors by School* with the Rank of the School's Average Combined SAT Scores and the Percentage of Students in the School Who Took the SAT

School Number	% Parents Employing Private Counselors	Rank of School's Average SAT Combined Scores	Rank of School's Percentage of Students Taking the SAT
1	22	1	1
2	17	2	3
3	11	3	4
4	7	6	7.5
5	7	7	5.5
6	6	5	5.5
7	5	9	9
8	4	8	7.5
9	3	4	2
10	2	10	7

*Based on parent interview data.

EXHIBIT 2.55

Descriptive Characteristics of Students Who Saw Private Counselors*

	Percentage of Category
Grade	
11th	8
12th	9
Sex	
Male	7
Female	10
Race	
Asian	—
Black	5
Hispanic	—
White	10

*Based on parent interview data.

These staff members were generally full time with the center and had an educational background in special education and/or counseling.

- For the most part, no need was seen for the addition of a guidance counselor at these centers. Principals appeared satisfied with the guidance and counseling services currently available and, though they would not mind having another employee, a guidance counselor position would not be their first choice.

- Responsibilities principals expected a guidance counselor to assume if one were assigned to them included involvement "with crisis intervention," "parent-counseling, as well as a lot of non-guidance tasks," and "counseling child on general attitudes, and self-image, work directly with child in the classroom--would not do testing or be involved in discipline."

- When questioned as to whether or not there should be a link between their center and the guidance and counseling department, many of the principals indicated that their staff could profit from in-service education/training that was available to counselors.

To summarize, principals/directors of supplemental centers indicated that the guidance and counseling function is being implemented adequately in their schools, though not by someone called a guidance counselor.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES RAISED BY THE FINDINGS

This section summarizes the major similarities and differences found in the services delivered and in the consumer perceptions of the guidance and counseling services across the three school levels.

Similarities and Differences Across School Levels

Services Delivered

While counselors at all school levels spent a large portion of their time counseling students, differences existed in the focus of these activities and in how they were conducted. Specifically:

- Elementary counselors proportionately spent more of their counseling time on personal/social topics than J/I/M and senior high counselors.

- J/I/M and senior high counselors proportionately spent more time doing individual counseling than they do group counseling, while the opposite was true for elementary school counselors.

- Senior high counselors spent a greater portion of their counseling time on scheduling classes as compared to J/I/M counselors.

- Senior high counselors proportionally spent almost twice as much time as J/I/M counselors on college/career-related topics.

This type of variation is not surprising given the differences in students' developmental stages and needs at the various school levels. General topics of personal/social concerns might best be discussed with elementary students in a group setting. Adolescents, on the other hand, may wish to discuss such topics in a more private setting where confidentiality is assured. Moreover, it makes sense that college/career-related topics would be discussed more at the senior high level than at the other levels.

Variations also occurred in how counselors apportioned their time among their various responsibilities. These variation suggest that the position of counselor is not as generic as extant MCPS documents imply. Given current counselor responsibilities, it seems clear that the role of the counselor differs in some very important ways at each of the three school levels. If these differences are seen as appropriate and acceptable, one implication is that distinctions need also to be made in the goals for each level and possibly even in the skills required.

Counselor/Principal Satisfaction with Services

Although the majority of counselors, teachers, and principals at each grade expressed some level of overall satisfaction with the guidance and counseling services, the percentage of respondents expressing this satisfaction decreased as one looks at the data from the elementary through senior high levels (Figure 4, p. 51).

While the differences between staff perceptions of how counselors spend their time and how they should spend their time were very small at the elementary level, they were quite pronounced at the senior high level. These data plus staff comments indicate that there are major problems with the role of the counselor at the senior high level and that much of this dissatisfaction stems from the time which must be devoted to class scheduling. Time-consuming tasks related to this process include processing paperwork, meeting with students to discuss simple schedule changes, and leveling classes when there are problems with the master schedule or when more students register than were anticipated. The argument presented by counselors was that if they could be relieved of some of their scheduling responsibilities, they could use their time to counsel more students effectively.

Parental Knowledge and Satisfaction

Parents at the elementary level were relatively uninformed about school counselors and their functions. Sharp increases in awareness and use of counselors occur at the J/I/M and senior high levels. And, at the J/I/M level, contact between parents and counselors occurred more frequently than at the other school levels. One factor contributing to this is that J/I/M counselors are responsible for developing a four-year plan of course studies with eighth grade students. Part of this process requires the counselor to discuss and review decisions with parents. Additionally, during the J/I/M school years, parents seem to become more aware of test scores and grades in anticipation of the child's attending high school.

Generally, parents expressed satisfaction with counseling services although there was decreasing satisfaction as one moves from the elementary to the senior high levels.

Student Use and Satisfaction

Student contact with counselors increased sharply from the elementary to the senior high level. However, the focus of this contact also changed, moving from personal/social issues to concerns regarding program planning, scheduling, and postgraduate activities. Although the majority of students at each grade expressed some level of overall satisfaction with the guidance and counseling services, the percentage of respondents expressing this satisfaction decreased from the elementary through senior high levels. And, students increasingly reported that they did not take their problems to a counselor because they did not think the counselor could help them. Further, compared to other school levels, a larger percentage of senior high students indicated that they did not meet with a counselor because the "counselor was always too busy." This suggests that the senior high counselors may need to work on the image they portray to students. On the other hand, it may be a reflection of reality. Conflicting demands may currently make the counselor unavailable to students, especially at peak-time periods when scheduling demands are considerable.

Implications

These findings raise a number of important issues regarding counseling in MCPS.

First, profiles constructed from counselor observations indicate that at each school level there was a great deal of variation in how counselors apportioned their time among their various responsibilities. In addition to the variations discussed in the previous sections, observations of counselors also revealed some qualitative differences in how counselors carried out the guidance function from school to school. For example:

- Some counselors met with teachers on a weekly basis. Other counselors seemed to rely primarily on teachers to initiate interactions.

- Some counselors made a point to be visible in the schools. They took time to be in the halls when classes were changing to remind students about homework assignments and meetings or to exchange pleasantries. Other counselors rarely left the guidance office.

- Some counselors took advantage of their adjunct duty assignments to interact with students. These counselors used lunch or bus duty to observe student peer interactions, to check on student progress, or to discuss the latest sports event at the school. Other counselors complained that these adjunct duties were a waste of their time.

- Some counselors appeared very comfortable in their role in the school and with the working relationship they had with the principal. Others appeared unsure of themselves. Some seemed constrained by some of the priorities principals set for them.

- Some counselors conducted parent education programs/workshops; others did not.

These variations may reflect more than simply differences in "counselor style." They may be an indication of differences in counselor motivation and job satisfaction. Just as viable an explanation is a lack of a county-wide guidance program and a lack of uniform and strong management of the counselors as they implement their perception, as well as those of their principals, of what the guidance and counseling function should be.

Second, the data suggest that the counselor's role at the various school levels is very different. At the elementary level, the counselor played the role of the nurturer, focusing on helping students with personal/social problems or concerns in a nonthreatening way. At the J/I/M level, there was some carryover of this role in that a sizable portion of counseling time was devoted to addressing personal/social concerns. However, at the J/I/M level, the counselor began working with students to develop their class schedules and four-year plans. By senior high, the counselor's role seemed to be completely reversed from what it was at the elementary level. Personal/social topics were infrequently discussed, and emphasis switched to developing and changing class schedules.

Third, the data suggest that problems exist at the senior high level. Principals, teachers, and counselors all take exception to current patterns of time allocation, uniformly suggesting that the amount of time devoted to scheduling and related duties is excessive. What has been referred to as "the paperwork burden" is only part of the problem. Much of the counseling and holding conferences directly with students also focus on scheduling and program adjustments. Counselors spend relatively little time dealing with other concerns although they and others clearly feel that more time should be spent on them. A careful examination needs to be made of the role expectations expressed for senior high counselors to see if these expectations are realistic, given the demands of the senior highs as well as the feelings of the senior high students.

CHAPTER 3

GUIDANCE STAFFING

This chapter of the report will present findings related to staffing assigned to the delivery of guidance and counseling services in MCPS. In addition, comparisons will be made between MCPS and schools within Maryland and across the nation.

CURRENT NUMBER OF GUIDANCE POSITIONS

The number of positions in the FY 1985 operating budget related to the delivery of guidance services are shown in Table 3.1. The 213.5 counselors are classified as 10-month, Grade C-D positions on the Professional Salary Schedule. The salary range for these positions was from $17,428 (Grade C, Step 1) to $35,824 (Grade D, Longevity 3). All counselors received 21.5 Extended-Year-Employment (EYE) days, effectively making them 11-month employees. The 21 career information assistant positions were Grade 14 on the Supporting Services Wage Schedule and had an hourly wage range of $8.17 (Step A) to $10.84 (Step H). The guidance secretary positions assigned to the J/I/M and senior high schools were 12-month, Grade 10 positions on the Supporting Services Wage Schedule. The 21 school registrar positions were 10-month, Grade 11 positions on the Supporting Services Wage Schedule. The hourly wage ranges for the secretary and registrar positions were from $7.28 (Step A) to $9.57 (Step H) and from $11.39 (Step A) to $15.57 (Step H), respectively.

The supervisor of guidance currently assigned to the Office of the Deputy Superintendent is a Grade O Administrative and Supervisory position. Although not included in the FY 1985 operating budget, one additional person was assigned to work with the supervisor of guidance. This person was a 10-month teacher specialist, Grade C-D (30 EYE days), on the Professional Salary Schedule.

Although one secretary per secondary school was designated as support for the guidance function, school principals have the authority to assign additional clerical staff, from their school allocation, to the guidance function. In only two of the 36 schools that responded did the principal choose to assign a portion of the schools' clerical support to the guidance function. Both of the schools that received additional support were senior high schools. Exhibit 3.2 shows data collected from secondary resource counselors concerning the current availability of and the need for additional clerical support. Only 25 percent of all respondents indicated that additional full- or part-time clerical support was needed. Senior high resource counselors indicated a stronger need for additional clerical support (39%) than did J/I/M resource counselors (11%). No respondent, however, indicated that existing clerical support could be eliminated.

Exhibit 3.3 shows data collected from secondary principals concerning the current availability of and need for additional clerical support. Twenty-nine percent of the principals indicated a need for either additional full- or part-time clerical support for the guidance function. Unlike resource counselor responses, no difference in the level of indicated need was found between senior high and J/I/M principals.

EXHIBIT 3.1

Number of Positions Related to Delivery of Guidance Services FY 1985

School Level	Position	Number
Elementary	Counselor	41.5
J/I/M	Counselor	66.0
	Guidance Secretary	16.5
Senior High	Counselor (school based)	105.0
	Counselor (Edison Center)	1.0
	Career Information Assistant	21.0
	Registrar	21.0
	Guidance Secretary	21.0
Central Office	Supervisor of Guidance	1.0
Total		294.0

EXHIBIT 3.2

Resource Counselor Response to Questions on Counselor Questionnaires Concerning School-based Clerical Support*

School Level	N	Have Full-time Clerk	Need Full-time Clerk	Have Half-time Clerk	Need Half-time Clerk
J/I/M	18	0	0	0	2
Senior	18	1	3	1	4

*Number of respondents selecting each answer choice.

Past Trends in the Number of Positions

The first three elementary counselor positions were added to the operating budget in FY 1978. The number of elementary counselor positions doubled over the past four years from 20.5 in FY 1982 to 41.5 in FY 1985. Even with this tremendous increase, the number of elementary counselor positions were still insufficient to make guidance services available to all elementary schools. Exhibit 3.4 shows the characteristics of elementary schools with and without counselors during the 1983-84 school year.

On the average, elementary schools with counselors had larger enrollments, a higher percentage of minority students, a higher mobility rate and lower longitudinal California Achievement Test results than elementary schools without counselors. In addition, a larger proportion of the schools with counselors had a special education program located at their school.

The number of guidance positions at the J/I/M and senior high levels decreased only slightly over the past 5 years. Exhibit 3.5 shows the number of counselor positions funded in the operating budget from FY 1981 to FY 1985. The number of school registrar, career information assistant, and guidance secretary positions have remained basically constant over the same period, with one of each position assigned to each J/I/M (no career information assistants) and senior high schools. The only changes in the number of these positions was associated with either the opening or closing of schools. Student enrollment and the counselor/student ratio are also shown in Exhibit 3.5.

While the number of J/I/M and senior high counselor positions was reduced slightly over the 5-year period, student enrollment for these grade levels decreased from 52,434 in FY 1981 to 47,986 in FY 1985. This amounted to a decrease in student enrollment of 8.5 percent and a corresponding reduction in the number of secondary counselors of 6 percent. The result was a slight improvement in the counselor-to-student ratio from 1/286 to 1/278.

The number of positions allocated to supervision and management of the delivery of guidance services varied significantly over the past seven years. In FY 1978 two additional area counselor specialist positions were added to the three already in the operating budget to provide one counselor specialist position per administrative area. The FY 1979 operating budget, however, deleted all five of the area-office-based counselor specialist positions when responsibility for the guidance and counseling function was transferred from what was then called the Office of Continuum Education to the Office of the Deputy Superintendent. Over this same period of time, the supervisor of guidance position remained as the single surviving non-school-based guidance position. From time to time, however, there were one or two counselor specialist positions assigned to assist the supervisor of guidance.

EXHIBIT 3.3

Principal Response to Questions Concerning School-based Clerical Support as Reported During Interviews*

School Level	N	Have Full-time Clerk	Need Full-time Clerk	Have Half-time Clerk	Need Half-time Clerk
J/I/M	10	0	3	0	0
Senior	11	1	1	0	2

* Number of respondents selecting each answer choice.

EXHIBIT 3.4

Characteristics of Elementary Schools With and Without Counselors*

		Counselor Position			
		Full-time	Half-time	Split-time	None
Total number of schools		22	5	16	62
Location:	Area 1	9	1	6	
	Area 2	7	3	4	
	Area 3	6	1	6	
Average enrollment		379 (21)	344	304	319
Average % minority students		37	34	35	26
Average mobility rate		53 (21)	51	51	44
Average longitudinal NCE score**		66 (19)	70	69	72 (53)
Percentage of schools with special ed. programs		86	80	81	68

* Numbers in parentheses are the number of schools on which data are based if less than total number presented in the exhibit.

** Average longitudinal Normal Curve Equivalent scores from the California Achievement Test for students in the same school in Grade 3 (1981) and Grade 5 (1983).

EXHIBIT 3.5

Number of Counselor Positions FY 1981-FY 1985

	Fiscal Year				
	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Elementary					
Counselors	20.5	20.5	23.5	31.5	41.5
J/I/M					
Counselor	77.5	72.5	71.5	68.0	66.0
Enrollment	22,283	20,304	20,094	19,007	18,389
Counselor/student	1/286	1/280	1/281	1/279	1/278
Senior High					
Counselor	104.5	108.5	106.0	107.0	105.0
Enrollment	30,151	30,882	29,550	29,730	29,597
Counselor/student	1/289	1/285	1/279	1/279	1/282
Total Counselors	202.5	201.5	201.0	206.5	212.5

COUNSELOR CASELOADS

Guidelines

The current staffing guidelines, as stated in the FY 1985 operating budget, were the same for both J/I/M and senior high schools and provided one counselor per 300 students. Although stated as a goal rather than a guideline in the FY 1985 budget, the staffing objective for elementary counselors was a half-time position per school with less than 300 students and a full-time position for schools with over 300 students. The staffing guideline for registrar and guidance secretary was one each per J/I/M and senior high school, regardless of enrollment. In addition, the staffing guidelines allocated a career information assistant to each senior high school. Although the counselor/student ratio varied somewhat by school, overall, MCPS was meeting its guideline at the secondary level. As mentioned earlier, however, further improvement is needed to attain the elementary counselor staffing goal. Forty-nine and one-half additional elementary counselor positions would be needed to accomplish the staffing goal.

Counselor Caseloads During the 1983-84 School Year

Exhibit 3.6 shows the average and the range of caseloads for MCPS counselors with different positions (full-, half-, or split-time) at the various school levels. At the J/I/M and senior high levels, the counselor's caseload appeared to be adjusted for the type of position that the counselor had. That is, split- and half-time counselors were responsible for fewer students than full-time counselors. This was not so at the elementary level. There, a half-time counselor could be responsible for as many students as a full-time counselor. Furthermore, a split-time counselor could be responsible for almost twice as many students as a full-time counselor.

The elementary counselor's caseload appeared to reflect the status quo of elementary counseling. Few school districts have guidance counselors at the elementary level, and those that do may have a counselor responsible for all elementary students or for several elementary schools.

Large caseloads at the elementary level may be justified since the counselor does not have the class scheduling duties of secondary counselors. Additionally, the types of student problems counselors encounter at the elementary level may be less severe than those at the secondary level. On the other hand, proponents of counseling at the elementary level might argue that individual meetings with all students about concerns other than scheduling are necessary. Furthermore, though problems of elementary students may not be as severe as those of older students, special efforts put forth at the elementary level may help prevent severe problems from developing in the later grades.

As will be pointed out later, MCPS caseloads compared favorably with other school districts both in Maryland and across the nation. However, case loads recommended by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) in 1983 for the elementary, J/I/M, and senior high level were 300 to 400, 250

EXHIBIT 3.6

Counselor Caseloads

	Counselor Job Positions		
	Full-time	Split-time	Half-time
School Level	Mean (Range)	Mean (Range)	Mean (Range)
Elementary	379 (215-617)	596 (461-729)	344 (274-424)
J/I/M	303 (250-400)		123 (80-165)
Senior	322 (200-430)	270 (230-310)	183 (150-200)

* Figures for J/I/M and senior high counselors are based on responses to counselor questionnaires. Elementary counselor figures are based on information in the Statistical Profiles 1983-84 for only those elementary schools that had counselors.

to 350, and 200 to 300, respectively. Considering only MCPS elementary schools with counselors, the average full-time counselor caseload fell near the high end of the ASCA's recommended range, and the caseload of counselors split between two schools or assigned on a half-time basis exceeded this range. On the average, J/I/M level caseloads fell comfortably within the recommended range, while full-time senior high caseloads slightly exceeded the recommended range. It should be noted, however, that at all school levels the high end of the MCPS range exceeded that recommended by the ASCA.

COMPARISONS WITH OTHER SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Counseling Staff

Exhibit 3.7 shows data collected from selected Maryland school systems on the number of counselors and counselor/student ratios by school type. Overall, the data indicated that the Montgomery County Public Schools budgeted for greater numbers of both elementary and secondary counselors than most other Maryland school systems. Only eight school systems that responded to the survey had counselors at the elementary level. Of the four providing student/counselor ratios, only Cecil County Public Schools had a smaller elementary counselor-to-student ratio. At the J/I/M level, only one school system (Harford County Public Schools) had a smaller counselor-to-student ratio than Montgomery County. At the senior high level, 33 percent of the other school systems had a counselor-to-student ratio lower than Montgomery County and two-thirds had a higher ratio. It is interesting to note that all five of the school systems with a lower senior-high-counselor-to-student ratio were relatively small school systems.

Exhibit 3.8 shows the same data collected on Maryland school systems, but for selected school districts in the United States. Although some differences can be seen, overall, Montgomery County Public Schools' number of counselors and counselor/student ratios look very good when compared to other school districts in the United States. Whereas MCPS was one of the few school systems in Maryland to have elementary school counselors, most (59%) of the school systems served outside Maryland had elementary school counseling programs. However, MCPS' elementary counselor/student ratio was considerably lower than that for any other school district surveyed. Likewise, at both the J/I/M and senior high levels, the MCPS counselor-to-student ratio was the lowest of all but one of the school systems responding.

Administrative Staff

The number of non-school-based administrative staffing resources budgeted by MCPS was significantly lower than all four of the comparable size school systems in Maryland. Although most school systems in the state budgeted for only a single guidance supervisor/administrator, the other four large enrollment school systems had two to six positions assigned to provide supervision and overall direction to the delivery of guidance services. For example, Baltimore County had a supervisor of guidance and three supervisors; Prince George's County allocated a supervisor of guidance, two assistant supervisors, a coordinator of international students, and a language/minority counselor; and Baltimore City had three central office

EXHIBIT 3.7

Number of Counselors and Counselor/Student Ratios for Selected Maryland School Systems* FY 1984

School System	Number of Counselors			Counselor/Student Ratios		
	Elem	J/I/M	Senior	Elem	J/I/M	Senior
Allegany	0**	-	15	-	-	1/416
Anne Arundel	10	19	56	-	1/462***	
Baltimore City	0	-	159	-	1/349***	
Baltimore County	87	57	93	1/400	1/350	1/350
Calvert	5	6	8	1/653	1/316	1/300
Cecil	2	6	12.5	1/340	1/370	1/340
Charles	10	12	13	-	-	-
Dorchester	0	3	6	-	1/433	1/320
Frederick	0	14	18	1/450***		
Garrett	0	3	5	-	1/425	1/300
Harford	6.5	15	22	-	1/466	1/386
Howard	1	22	24	-	1/275	1/348
Kent	0	1	3	-	1/800	1/265
Montgomery	35	71	113	1/379	1/295	1/315
Prince George's	40	55	79	1/460	1/320	1/445
Queen Anne's	0	3	4	-	1/466	1/384
Somerset	0	0	4	-	-	1/350
Talbot	0	3	3	-	1/300	1/300
Worcester	0	4	7	-	1/374	1/230

* Number of counselors is full-time equivalent.
** One elementary counselor travels to all elementary schools to promote counseling techniques.
*** Ratio is combined junior and senior high schools.

EXHIBIT 3.8

Number of Counselors and Counselor/Student Ratio for Selected School Systems in the United States* for FY 1984

School System	Number of Counselors			Counselor/Student Ratios		
	Elem.	J/I/M	Senior	Elem.**	J/I/M	Senior
Los Angeles, CA	0	342	535	-	1/525	1/450
Dade Co., FL	101	(250)		-	1/432***	
Orange Co., FL	67	55	45	-	-	-
Detroit, Mich.	52	148	167	-	-	1/300
Cleveland, Ohio	0	53	51	-	1/400	1/400
Montgomery Co.	35	71	113	1/379	1/295	1/315

* Number of counselors is body count, not full-time equivalent.
** School districts reported ratio on basis of total enrollment, not students served, and are not comparable to MCPS.
***Ratio is combined junior and senior high schools.

counselors and two administrative supervisors in addition to the coordinator of guidance. A similar situation was observed with school districts of equivalent enrollment around the country. All such school districts contacted budgeted two to four supervisory/administrative staff in addition to the guidance coordinator/director.

Support Staff

Data were also collected on the clerical support that other selected surrounding school systems provided to the guidance and counseling function. Exhibit 3.9 shows the number of secretary, clerk, and registrar positions assigned to the average senior high school in seven surrounding school systems. None of the school systems contacted used part-time clerical staff to assist with the delivery of guidance services. Most (63%) of the school systems assigned two full-time staff persons to the guidance and counseling function, in some combination of positions. Most (75%) assigned a full-time secretary to the guidance function, and the other two school systems used a full-time clerk rather than a secretary. Prince George's County Public Schools allocated a second guidance secretary to high schools with over 2,000 students. Half of the school systems assigned a full-time registrar to each high school. It is interesting to note that in Baltimore City Public Schools the assistant principal often performed the functions of registrar.

Exhibit 3.10 shows the number of secretary, clerk, and registrar positions that were assigned to the average J/I/M school in the same seven surrounding school systems. With a single exception, all school systems surveyed assigned exactly one position to the guidance function. Baltimore City allocated a part-time rather than a full-time secretary. This was the only use of a part-time clerical position at either the J/I/M or senior high level. No school system contacted allocated registrars to the J/I/M level. Exhibit 3.10 indicates that clerical support staffing in MCPS was comparable to that enjoyed in most other local jurisdictions. The allocation pattern in MCPS, as in most other school systems, was to assign one secretary and one other support position, either a registrar or a clerk.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES RAISED BY THE FINDINGS

The overall conclusion of the study concerning staffing resources is that Montgomery County Public Schools is on a par with or above other school systems in Maryland and the nation in the level of staffing resources allocated to the delivery of guidance services. MCPS is meeting its established standards of maximum counselor/student ratios at both the J/I/M and senior high levels. In fact, a slight improvement in these ratios occurred during the past five years due to a larger decrease in student enrollment than the decrease in the number of secondary counselors. In both the actual number of secondary counselors and the counselor/student ratio, MCPS was equal to or slightly ahead of other school systems in Maryland.

Although MCPS is not presently meeting its established goal of assigning counselors at the elementary level, over the past few years MCPS has made significant improvements in the resources allocated to the delivery of guidance services to elementary students. Montgomery County is in the

EXHIBIT 3.9

Number of Clerical Positions Assigned to Guidance in the Average Senior High School in Selected Surrounding Public School Systems for FY 1984

School System	Sec.	P.T. Sec.	Clerk	P.T. Clerk	Registrar	Other	Total
Anne Arundel	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Baltimore City	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Baltimore Co.	0	0	1	0	0	1*	2
D. C. Schools	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Fairfax	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
Howard	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
Prince George's	1**	0	0	0	1	0	2
Montgomery	1	0	0	0	1	0	2

* Records clerk position.
** A second secretary assigned for schools over 2000 students.

EXHIBIT 3.10

Number of Clerical Positions Assigned to Guidance in the Average J/I/M School in Selected Surrounding Public School Systems for FY 1984

School System	Sec.	P.T. Sec.	Clerk	P.T. Clerk	Registrar	Other	Total
Anne Arundel	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Baltimore City	0	1	0	0	0	0	0.5
Baltimore Co.	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
D. C. Schools	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Fairfax	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Howard	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Prince George's	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Montgomery	1	0	0	0	0	0	1

forefront of the state and the nation in its effort to provide counseling services at the elementary level. Although the number of elementary counselor positions has doubled since FY 1982, a significant number of schools are still without a counselor. Forty of the 99 elementary schools do not currently have access to counseling services. An additional 49.5 elementary counselor positions would be needed for MCPS to meet its goal of a half-time counselor in each school with less than 300 students and a full-time counselor in each school with over 300 students.

Another issue identified in this chapter is how the existing resources are assigned and the resulting caseloads. Half-time elementary counselors can be responsible for as many students as a full-time counselor, and a split-time counselor can be responsible for almost twice as many students as a full-time counselor.

The clerical support MCPS provides to the secondary guidance function is at the same level as other school systems in Maryland. However, 39 percent of the senior high school counselors indicated a need for additional clerical support to assist in reducing the level of paperwork required of them.

The level of supervisory/support staffing resources allocated to the guidance and counseling function by Montgomery County is significantly lower than that of school systems of comparable enrollment in Maryland and around the nation. Most school systems have additional intermediate supervisory positions at either the central or area office level between the supervisor/director of guidance and the school-based counselors. The relative lack of supervisory support personnel in MCPS has some important implications for program development and management.

CHAPTER 4

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING

This chapter describes the current management and monitoring structure for guidance and counseling services. Topics discussed are the organization of the guidance unit, the monitoring of guidance staff, staff satisfaction with the supervision, and counselor recommendations for improving professional support.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The current organization of the guidance and counseling function in the Montgomery County Public Schools consists of two basic components: (1) school-based guidance counselors under the direct responsibility of principals and (2) a Central Office supervisor of guidance in the Office of the Deputy Superintendent. There is currently no formal linkage of responsibilities between the Central Office Guidance Unit and the pupil personnel workers or other staff assigned to the area administrative offices. Likewise, there is also no formal linkage of responsibilities with either the special education services provided by the Office of Special and Alternative Education or instructional services provided by the Office for Instruction and Program Development.

Exhibit 4.1 indicates the type of organizational structure of the guidance and counseling function in 22 of the 24 public school systems in Maryland. As can be seen, Somerset County was the only other school system reporting an organizational structure similar to MCPS. Eight school systems had the guidance and counseling function reporting directly and solely to Pupil Services and two directly and solely to Instructional Services. The remaining ten school systems placed the guidance and counseling function under/with either a combination of Pupil Services and Instructional Services (6) or Pupil Services and Special Education (4). Of the 21 school systems reporting, all but three had the guidance function organizationally structured with Pupil Services solely or in some combination of Pupil Services and other organizational units.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR MONITORING GUIDANCE SERVICES

Direct day-to-day supervision of the delivery of guidance and counseling services in MCPS is the responsibility of local school administrators. Although specific responsibilities vary within schools, the principal, assistant principal, or some combination of the two have the overall responsibility for supervision of guidance services. The supervisor of guidance in the Office of the Deputy Superintendent provides overall program direction, coordination of in-service training, and advice and consultation

EXHIBIT 4.1

Organizational Structure of the Guidance Function
In Maryland Public School Systems*

School Systems With the Guidance Function Under:

Pupil Personnel
- Allegany County
- Dorchester County
- Frederick County
- Harford County
- Howard County
- Queen Anne's County
- Washington County
- Worcester County

Instructional Services
- Cecil County
- Wicomico County

Pupil Personnel and Instructional Services
- Anne Arundel County
- Carroll County
- Charles County
- Garrett County
- Prince George's County
- Talbot County

Superintendent
- Somerset County
- Montgomery County

Pupil Services and Special Education
- Baltimore City
- Baltimore County
- Calvert County
- Kent County

*Data not available for St. Mary's and Caroline Counties.

to principals on special personnel situations. A supervisor of instruction in each area office is responsible for assisting school guidance counselors with in-service training and needs assessment. It should be noted that these responsibilities are in addition to their regular instructional supervision duties and, as such, only a limited amount of time is available to allocate to guidance activities.

Exhibits 4.2 and 4.3 show the data obtained from asking counselors and principals, "Who monitors/supervises the counselor's work?" The majority of both counselors and principals at all school levels agreed that the local school administrators were responsible for monitoring the work of counselors. The second highest category of response to the question concerning responsibility for supervision was some combination of local school administration and the supervisor of guidance. Extremely few respondents (none at J/I/M level and 8 percent at the senior high level) felt that the supervisor of guidance had the sole responsibility for supervision of counselors.

SUPERVISION/MONITORING PROCEDURES

Although the specific procedures for monitoring the work of counselors varies from school to school, it is generally agreed that the principal or assistant principal provide direction to resource counselors who, in turn, provide day-to-day direction to regular counselors. The principal or assistant principal conducts the formal evaluation of all counselors. They may receive input and assistance from the resource counselor and, in special situations, from the area supervisor of instruction assigned to the guidance and counseling function or the Central Office supervisor of guidance. When counselors were asked, "How was this monitoring/supervising done?", the most frequent response across all school levels was informal and formal observations of the counselor doing his/her job. The next most frequent response across all school levels was meetings/conferences with supervisors and the formal evaluation process.

School principals are also responsible for personnel selections to fill vacant counselor positions in their schools. The principal usually forms a selection committee composed of several faculty members (one a counselor), parents, community members, and sometimes students to assist him in the selection process. The principal is also responsible for the other personnel administrative responsibilities concerning counselors, such as approving leave and signing time vouchers.

COUNSELOR SATISFACTION WITH HOW CURRENT SUPERVISION IS PERFORMED

The data in Exhibit 4.4 show counselor response to the question, "How satisfied are you with how this monitoring/supervising is done?" The majority of counselors at all three levels are satisfied with the current supervision procedures. Sixty-three percent of the elementary counselors responded that they were either "very satisfied" or "satisfied."

At the J/I/M level, 77 percent of the resource counselors indicated that they were either "very satisfied" or "satisfied," while nearly all (90%) of the regular J/I/M counselors indicated the same. However, a far greater percentage of regular counselors indicated that they were "satisfied" (67%)

EXHIBIT 4.2

Percentage of Counselors Indicating Who Was Responsible for Monitoring/ the Delivery of Guidance Services*

Position	Elementary (N=29)	J/I/M Regular (N=32)	J/I/M Resource (N=18)	Senior Regular (N=63)	Senior Resource (N=18)
Supervisor of Guidance	—	—	—	2	6
Principal	59	44	50	33	67
Assistant Principal	—	19	6	11	—
Principal & Assistant Principal	—	9	17	8	17
No one specifically	10	6	—	10	—
Supervisor of Guidance & Principal and/ or Assistant Principal	21	9	11	6	11
Resource Counselor & Principal and/or Assistant Principal and/or Supervisor of Guidance	—	3	—	24	—
Resource Counselor	—	—	—	5	—
Area Supervisor	3	—	—	—	—
Area Supervisor & Supervisor of Guidance & Principal	3	—	—	—	—
Unspecified combination or "other"	7	9	17	2	—

*Based on counselor questionnaire data.

EXHIBIT 4.3

Percentage of Principals Indicating Who Was Responsible for Monitoring/Supervising the Delivery of Guidance Services*

Position	Elementary (N=18)	J/I/M (N=18)	Senior (N=10)
Supervisor of Guidance	—	—	—
Principal	94	40	80
Assistant Principal	—	20	10
No one specifically	—	—	—
Principal & Assistant Principal	—	20	—
Supervisor of Guidance & Principal and/ or Assistant Principal	6	—	10
Resource Counselor & Principal and/or Assistant Principal and/or Supervisor of Guidance	—	20	—

*Based on principal interview data.

EXHIBIT 4.4

Percentage of Counselors Indicating Various Levels of Satisfaction with How Supervision Is Done*

Respondents	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Elementary				
Counselors (N=26)	40	23	16	8
J/I/M				
Resource Counselors (N=18)	59	18	18	6
Regular Counselors (N=30)	23	67	10	—
Senior High				
Resource Counselors (N=17)	62	25	13	—
Regular Counselors (N=54)	38	40	13	9
TOTAL (N=145)	41	41	13	5

*Based on counselor questionnaire data.

rather than "very satisfied" (23%). Most of the high school counselors (88% of resource and 78% of regular) indicated that they were either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with how supervision was performed.

During the early stages of the study, a concern was raised that counselors had insufficient professional support and opportunity for consultation with other staff and counselors. To verify this concern, a question was added to the counselor and principal questionnaires. Exhibit 4.5 displays the data collected in response to this question. The feeling of insufficient professional support and consultation is particularly strong among elementary counselors. Seventy-six percent of the elementary counselors responding indicated that they did not feel that the present system provided sufficient support. Elementary principals, although to a lesser extent, agreed with elementary counselors that insufficient support was available.

Counselors at the J/I/M and senior high levels were evenly divided in response to this issue. Approximately half of regular and resource counselors at both levels answered "no" to the statement that the present system of supervision/monitoring does not provide the counselors with sufficient professional support and consultation.

The previous discussion about the provision of sufficient professional support by the present supervisory system assumed that the supervisory system is school based. The data in Exhibit 4.6 address the issue of the Central Office providing such professional support and consultation. A majority of all levels and types of counselors indicated that the current Central Office guidance administrative structure did not provide counselors with the opportunity for professional support and consultation. Although to a somewhat lesser extent, a majority of principals responding to this question indicated the same.

A related question addressed by the study was whether or not the current system for managing the delivery of guidance and counseling services provided opportunities for counselors to improve professionally. The data in Exhibit 4.7 show that elementary counselors and principals had differing opinions concerning this issue. The majority of counselors responding (63%) indicated "no," the current system does not provide the opportunity for professional improvement, while a majority of principals (61%) said that the current system does in fact provide such opportunities.

The majority of J/I/M and senior high counselors and principals also expressed the opinion that the current management system does not offer opportunity for professional improvement.

COUNSELOR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

The counselor questionnaire asked for recommendations for the monitoring/supervisory procedures that would provide opportunity for counselors to seek professional support and consultation. Approximately a third of the secondary counselors (28 percent of J/I/M and 37 percent of senior) provided no response to the question. Of the 14 responses received from J/I/M counselors, 10 suggested additional staff (six at area office and four at central office, and 4 suggested additional in-service training. At the senior high level, only a third of the respondents recommended

EXHIBIT 4.5

Percentage of Counselors and Principals Indicating Whether or Not the Present Supervising System Provided Sufficient Professional Support and Consultation*

Respondents	Yes	No	Don't Know
Elementary			
Counselors (N=29)	24	76	0
Principals (N=18)	33	61	6
J/I/M			
Resource/Chair Counselors (N=18)	50	50	0
Regular Counselors (N=31)	42	55	0
Principals (N=11)	64	36	0
Senior High			
Resource/Chair Counselors (N=18)	36	44	0
Regular Counselors (N=63)	54	46	0
Principals (N=10)	80	20	0

*Based on information from counselor questionnaires and principal interviews.

EXHIBIT 4.6

Percentage of Counselors and Principals Indicating If Central Office Guidance Structure Provided Counselors with the Opportunity for Professional Support and Consultation*

Respondents	Yes	No	Don't Know
Elementary			
Counselors (N=29)	14	86	0
Principals (N=18)	22	72	6
J/I/M			
Resource/Chair Counselors (N=17)	33	67	0
Regular Counselors (N=31)	26	74	0
Principals (N=11)	36	64	0
Senior High			
Resource/Chair Counselors (N=18)	28	72	0
Regular Counselors (N=63)	36	62	0
Principals (N=10)	30	70	0

*Based on counselor questionnaires and principal interviews.

EXHIBIT 4.7

Percentage of Counselors and Principals Indicating Whether or Not MCPS Provides Counselors with Sufficient Opportunity To Improve Themselves Professionally*

Respondents	Yes	No	Don't Know
Elementary			
Counselors (N=29)	37	63	0
Principals (N=18)	61	33	6
J/I/M			
Resource Counselors (N=18)	33	67	0
Regular Counselors (N=31)	26	74	0
Principals (N=11)	55	36	9
Senior High			
Resource Counselors (N=18)	28	72	0
Regular Counselors (N=63)	38	62	0
Principals (N=10)	50	50	0
TOTAL (N=198)	40	60	0

*Based on information from counselor questionnaires and principal interviews.

additional staffing. Another third suggested additional in-service training, and the remaining third indicated a need for more concerned leadership for guidance. Three-quarters of the elementary counselors responding to this question recommended some type of additional staffing as the means to increase professional support and consultation opportunities. Eleven (50%) suggested the creation of counseling specialists in the area administrative offices, and four (18%) recommended area guidance supervisors.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES RAISED BY THE FINDINGS

The major conclusion of this chapter is that the organizational and management structure currently found in MCPS is ineffective in providing counselors with professional support and consultation and the opportunity to improve themselves professionally. These feelings seem to be particularly strong among elementary counselors. This may be because there is only one elementary counselor per school, and if the principal does not have the knowledge or desire to consult with the counselor, the counselor is essentially on "his/her own" to seek out professional support and consultation. A few elementary counselors reportedly have used their own money to obtain professional consultation on special cases they encountered in their job. The guidance and counseling program in MCPS needs a well-defined management model that distributes responsibility for program development, coordination/supervision, and implementation to the organizational level appropriate for that particular component; centralized program development, area office coordination/supervision, and school level implementation.

Additional support for the need to reexamine the organizational and management structure in MCPS is found in information from other school districts. The organizational and management structure in MCPS is significantly different from those in other school systems in Maryland and around the country. No other Maryland school system of comparable size has the supervisor of guidance administratively reporting directly to the superintendent or deputy superintendent. In addition, most other school systems not only have additional staff responsible for coordinating the guidance and counseling program, but organizationally they also are located closer to the actual delivery of services. The importance of these differences is the inability of the current organization in MCPS to adequately (1) define, structure, and develop the guidance and counseling function; (2) coordinate program implementation; and (3) provide schools with consultation and professional support.

CHAPTER 5

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A NEW MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE FOR IMPLEMENTING THE GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING FUNCTION

As noted in the preceding chapters, the major problems with the present structure and organization of the guidance and counseling function are the following:

- o Lack of a comprehensive, well-defined program
- o Inadequate extant job descriptions
- o Lack of goals and standards for their attainment
- o Inadequate professional support and training

It is the strong opinion of DEA that these problems cannot be solved without major changes in the structure for managing the guidance and counseling program. The present structure or the lack of a structure contribute greatly to the present problems.

To remedy this, DEA is recommending a system which is, in essence, very similar to that used to govern and coordinate most other pupil-related programs. The department recommends shifting the responsibility for guidance and counseling from its present position in the Office of the Deputy Superintendent to the Office of the Associate Superintendent for Instruction and Program Development. DEA further recommends the establishment of a specialist position in each area office which would be charged with monitoring and supporting the management of the guidance and counseling program under the authority of the area superintendent and through the school principals.

Presented in the following sections is a more detailed discussion of this plan which divides the total guidance and counseling function into three basic components: program development, program coordination, and program implementation.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Under the proposed administrative model, guidance and counseling program development would be conducted by a Guidance and Counseling Unit located in the Office of Instruction and Program Development. The unit would have overall responsibility for the definition, design, and development of all aspects of guidance and counseling. The Guidance and Counseling Unit would thus function for guidance and counseling in much the same way that other curriculum/program units function within the Department of Academic Skills and the Department of Career and Vocational Education. To ensure the visibility of the unit and its access to executive management, it is further recommended that this unit report directly to the associate superintendent.

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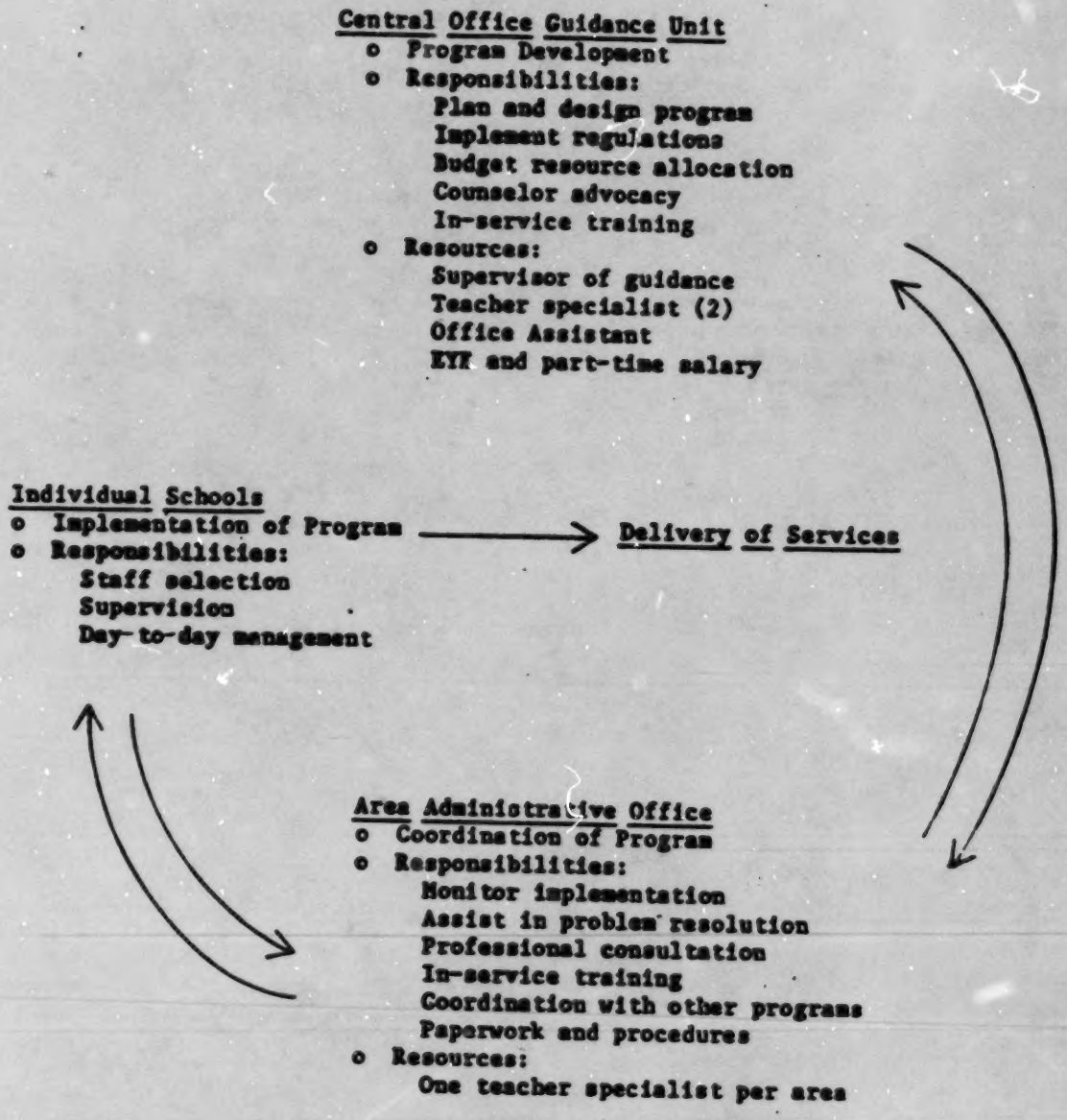
The Guidance and Counseling Unit in the Central Office would develop a program plan and specify competencies to be attained at the secondary level in four service areas:

FIGURE 5

GUIDANCE FUNCTION
RECOMMENDED MANAGEMENT SYSTEM



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- o Academic counseling
- o Personal/social counseling
- o College planning
- o Career/vocational guidance

Elementary school counseling would constitute a fifth service area which would be charged with meeting all the guidance and counseling needs of students in Grades K-6.

The mission of each of the five units would be to perform the following tasks for their particular service areas:

- o Plan, design, and develop area guidance and counseling programs
- o Provide assistance in developing and implementing designs for evaluating these guidance and counseling programs
- o Analyze current MCPS guidance and counseling priorities, activities, and trends and compare them to the state of the art and national guidance and counseling practices
- o Develop and conduct necessary in-service training for area-based staff assigned the responsibility for coordinating guidance and counseling implementation
- o Provide counselor advocacy support with the executive staff and the Board of Education
- o In conjunction with area staff, (1) identify, budget, and allocate the resources necessary for implementation of these programs and (2) establish procedures for area-based staff for use in coordinating and monitoring program implementation.

DEA estimates that carrying out these responsibilities and functions will require a supervisor, two teacher specialist positions (one responsible for elementary guidance and counseling and one responsible for secondary guidance and counseling), clerical support, and an appropriate amount of EYE and part-time professional funds. Some of these resources can be obtained without the budgeting of additional MCPS resources. The supervisor position, one teacher specialist position, and some amount of clerical support are currently assigned similar responsibilities in the Office of the Deputy Superintendent. These positions could be transferred to the new unit. If a new full-time clerical position is needed and is not available from existing allocations, an additional $19,700 would have to be budgeted. Finally, the second teacher specialist position would require an additional allocation of $42,250.

PROGRAM COORDINATION

Coordination of the guidance and counseling program would be the responsibility of the three area administrative offices. The area administrative offices would be responsible for the following:

- o Planning, supporting, and monitoring the implementation of countywide guidance and counseling programs

- Assisting principals in resolving problems which arise in managing their guidance and counseling programs or implementing MCPS guidance-related policies and regulations

- Providing professional consultation and support to individual principals and counselors concerning specific student situations

- Examining procedures associated with the delivery of guidance and counseling services and recommending improvements

- Coordinating the guidance and counseling program with other pupil-related and instructional programs in the area office

- In conjunction with the Central Office unit, providing needs assessment services and planning and coordination of counselor in-service training

To accomplish these responsibilities, each area office would need a counselor specialist position. It is anticipated that these three positions would be obtained by either requesting new positions or by reconstituting existing ones. If new positions are needed, the annual direct salary and fringe benefit cost would be approximately $128,217.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

The primary responsibility for the implementation and operation of the guidance and counseling program would remain, as it is now, with school principals. Principals would continue to be responsible for the following:

- Selection of the guidance and counseling staff

- Assignment of duties to the guidance and counseling staff in accordance with the guidance and counseling program, allowing flexibility for unique school needs

- Supervision of the guidance and counseling staff

- Evaluation of the guidance and counseling staff

- Management of the day-to-day guidance and counseling function activities with the assistance of the area office staff.

In elementary schools, this means the principal would have a direct working relationship with the individual counselor. In secondary schools, this means that the principal would work with an appropriate staff person who, in turn, would coordinate the other counselors in the department. Even in such a case, however, the principal would remain responsible for actual supervision and management of all counselors in the school.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

At least three possible implementation plans of the new management system should be considered.

The first, simultaneous implementation of all aspects of the management system, would have the three area-based counselor specialists allocated, selected, and assigned to the area offices concurrent with the formation of the Central Office Guidance and Counseling Unit. The advantage of this plan is that it would provide immediate consultation and professional support resources in the area offices. The disadvantage is that the Guidance and Counseling Unit would not have yet developed the guidance and counseling program. Thus, the area counselor specialists would be consulting with schools within the constraints of the current undefined program, and the position descriptions and role of the area counselor specialists might have to be modified later.

A second possible plan would have area associate superintendents select their counselor specialist at the same time as the Guidance and Counseling Unit is being established but have these three positions initially report to the supervisor of guidance and counseling to assist in the development of the guidance and counseling program. When the program development phase is completed, they would then return to their area assignments to coordinate the new program's implementation. This plan has the advantage of (1) allowing area-based staff to be involved with the development of the program from its inception and (2) significantly accelerating the planning and development of the guidance and counseling program due to the increased number of people involved in the development process. The main disadvantage is the increased money needed to fund these positions. Although it is difficult, at this early stage, to determine accurately the time necessary to plan and develop the guidance and counseling program, it is anticipated that, if both central office and area office staff are assigned to this effort, the program development should take about 120 days.

A third plan would call for deferring allocation of the three area-based counselor specialist positions until the Guidance and Counseling Unit is established, staffed, and has completed the development of the guidance and counseling program. This process will probably require about 180 days if only the staff from the Guidance and Counseling Unit are involved. The obvious advantage of this plan is reduced resource requirements in the first year of implementation by about 25 percent. The disadvantages are the lack of possible area involvement in developing the guidance and counseling program and an increase in the length of time needed to complete the guidance and counseling program since these staff would not be available to help.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings indicate that the overall guidance and counseling program in MCPS requires some significant modifications both in its structure and its management. Additionally, the role of the counselor in the senior high schools needs to be reexamined and, perhaps, reshaped to better meet the needs of students, staff, principals, and parents.

Presented in the following sections is a summary of the major study findings and DEA's recommendations.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

FINDINGS: The structure of the guidance program is poorly documented and defined. MCPS policies and regulations provide only very general programmatic guidelines and actual service delivery varies considerably and unsystematically among schools at the same level.

RECOMMENDATIONS: There is a need to develop a coherent and comprehensive program, similar to those for other countywide programs, which provides guidelines for service delivery, standards for assessing program attainments, monitoring mechanisms, and resources for training and professional growth.

In general, MCPS documents describe the guidance and counseling function of the schools in broad and often unclear terms (e.g., to assist students to succeed in school, to help personalize school experiences). These documents do not specifically say how the guidance and counseling function is to be implemented. Goals are spelled out in only very general ways; and there is no document similar to the Program of Studies, which exists for instructional areas, to provide a list of prescribed goals and objectives for the guidance and counseling functions. Furthermore, no distinctions are made in MCPS documents between the guidance and counseling function at the different school levels (elementary, J/I/M, senior high).

The picture of lack of program coordination and specification is reinforced when one looks at the services actually delivered. At each school level there is considerable variation in the proportion of time counselors allocate to different services. While such variation appears at the elementary level to be related to whether or not there is a counselor and whether that counselor is a half-time, split-time, or full-time person, at the J/I/M and senior high levels, there is no such explanation for the observed differences. And, the characteristics of students do not appear to relate systematically to differences in counselor activities.

Additionally, qualitative variations are evident from counselor observations. Some counselors meet with teachers on a weekly basis, while others rely on teachers to initiate contacts; some counselors make a point to be visible in the schools, while others rarely leave the guidance office area; and some counselors take advantage of their adjunct duty assignments to interact with students, while others complain that these duties are a waste of their time.

Finally, at all levels counselors express a strong need for professional support to assist them in performing and improving their services. The lack of a system for providing coordinated consultation, peer interaction, and professional growth clearly is seen as a weakness in the eyes of counselors.

This review of the guidance and counseling program structure leads to several conclusions. First, MCPS should follow the lead of some other school districts and develop a guidance and counseling program that would specify major guidance and counseling goals and objectives for each school level. This program should not be considered an add-on to current duties, but rather a comprehensive statement of expectations. Second, there is a need to define clearly the counselor's role in the schools. This role definition should include distinctions appropriate to the three school levels. This will require the development of both new formal job descriptions and new evaluation criteria which clarify the knowledge and activities for which counselors will be held responsible. Third, counselors should be provided with additional professional support and consultation to help them in their jobs and increase their skills. Fourth, monitoring should be enhanced to ensure appropriate implementation of the newly defined goals and objectives. Finally, MCPS might wish to explore some support systems developed or encouraged by MSDE, such as use of paraprofessionals, volunteers, or peer tutoring, that might further strengthen their program.

PROGRAM ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

FINDINGS: The current MCPS organizational structure for managing and monitoring individuals who provide guidance services is fragmented and ineffective.

RECOMMENDATIONS: There is a need to develop a new management structure which will provide both needed support for program development and service delivery and an effective mechanism for program monitoring.

The current MCPS organizational structure for guidance and counseling services is significantly different from most other systems in Maryland and around the country. No other Maryland school system of comparable size has the supervisor of guidance administratively reporting directly to the superintendent or deputy superintendent. Most school systems have combined responsibility for the guidance and counseling function with responsibility for other pupil services or, in a smaller number of cases, with either special education or instructional services. Most other school systems have additional staff responsible for coordinating the guidance and counseling program located closer to the actual delivery of services.

The present study shows that in MCPS direct responsibility for monitoring the day-to-day work of counselors is located with school-based

administrators and that most counselors are satisfied with this arrangement. However, the data also suggest that while it may be appropriate to allocate the day-to-day management responsibility for counselors to school-based administrators, some additional management/program development support is needed. Further, it is clear that resolving the problems in program structure enumerated above--the lack of a comprehensive program of studies, the inadequacy of extant job descriptions, the lack of goals and standards for their attainment, and the inadequate professional support and training--requires some central program development and coordinating mechanism.

It is, therefore, recommended that the guidance and counseling program be treated like any other program in MCPS with divided, well defined responsibilities at the central, area, and school levels. DEA recommends a new organization for the guidance and counseling program with the following features and responsibilities:

- Central Office: A Guidance and Counseling Unit should be located in the Office of the Associate Superintendent for Instruction and Program Development and should report directly to the associate superintendent. This unit would be charged with the planning and development of a countywide guidance and counseling program.

- Area Offices: The area offices would be charged both with providing assistance to schools in program implementation and ensuring that the guidance and counseling program is appropriately implemented. To accomplish this a counselor specialist (generalist) position should be assigned to each area office. This position would be charged with providing professional support to counselors and principals in the area.

- Local Schools: Principals would be charged with the responsibility for directly managing the implementation of the new countywide guidance and counseling program.

Figure 6 shows the overall management organization of the guidance and counseling program at each of the three levels.

The Guidance and Counseling Unit in the Central Office would develop a program plan and specify competencies to be attained at the secondary level in four service areas:

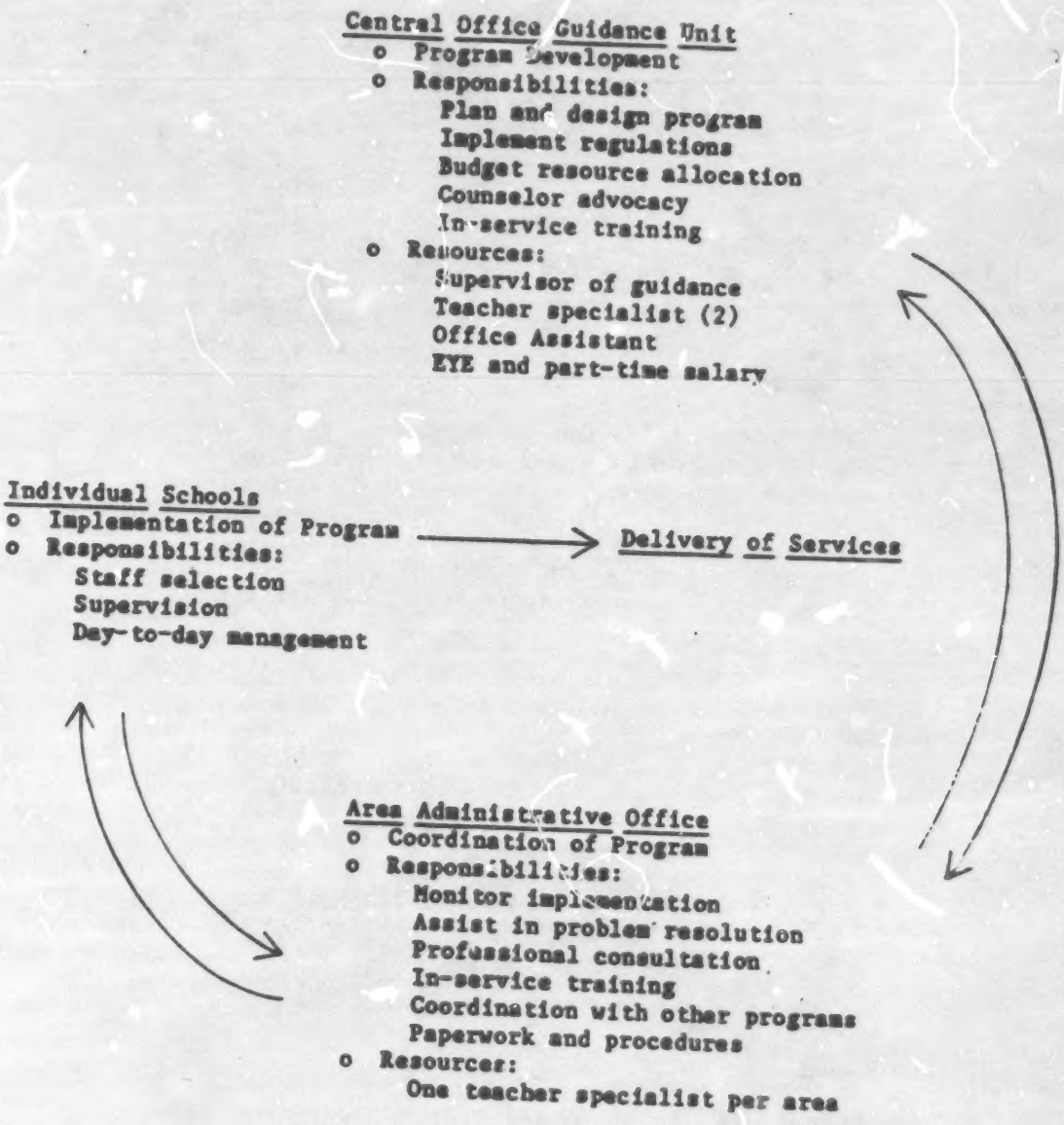
- Academic counseling
- Personal/social counseling
- College planning
- Career/vocational guidance

Elementary school counseling would constitute a fifth service area which would be charged with developing a high quality integrated program to meet the needs of students in Grades K-6. In addition, the Guidance and Counseling Unit would develop new job descriptions and evaluation criteria; provide training, professional consultation, and support; examine policies and procedures; and provide coordination with other Central Office units.

It is anticipated that much of the staffing for this unit could be accomplished through reassignment of extant positions or resources currently

FIGURE 6

GUIDANCE FUNCTION
RECOMMENDED MANAGEMENT SYSTEM



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provided to guidance and counseling through the Office of the Deputy Superintendent. The supervisor position, one teacher specialist position, and some amount of clerical support are currently assigned similar responsibilities in the Office of the Deputy Superintendent. An analysis of the functions of the proposed Guidance and Counseling Unit as compared to similar functions in the Department of Career and Vocational Education should be performed to determine if the remaining teacher specialist position should be moved from that department. If not, an additional $42,250 would have to be allocated for the second teacher specialist position. Furthermore, it is anticipated that a full-time clerical position will need to be allocated to the Guidance and Counseling Unit. If this position is not available from existing allocations, an additional $19,700 would have to be budgeted.

The area offices would be responsible for coordinating, supporting and monitoring the guidance and counseling program. Specialists would provide assistance to principals and counselors in implementing the program and monitoring its implementation to ensure that the program goals are being met. To provide the staffing for the area offices, it would be necessary either to reassign three counselor specialist positions or to request three new positions in the operating budget. The cost of three new area positions would be $128,217.

The primary responsibility for the day-to-day management of the guidance and counseling program would remain, as it is now, with the school principals; except that now, principals would be charged with implementing a standard countywide program, allowing some flexibility for individual school needs. Principals would continue to be responsible for selection of counseling staff, management of the guidance and counseling program as designed by the Guidance and Counseling Unit, supervision, and evaluation.

Several plans for phased implementation of the new management system should be considered. One possible plan calls for the simultaneous implementation of all aspects of the management system, which would have the area-based counselor specialists allocated, selected, and assigned to the area offices concurrent with the formation of the Central Office Guidance and Counseling Unit. A second plan would have area associate superintendents select their counselor specialist at the same time as the Guidance and Counseling Unit is being established and have these three positions report to the supervisor of guidance and counseling to assist in the development of the guidance and counseling program. They would then return to their area assignments to coordinate the new program's implementation. A third plan would defer allocation of the three area-based counselor specialist positions until the Guidance and Counseling Unit is established, staffed, and has completed the development of the guidance and counseling program and related tasks.

PROGRAM QUALITY

Satisfaction ratings of counselors, teachers, principals, parents and students indicated that the majority of them were either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with guidance and counseling services. However, the percentage of respondents expressing satisfaction decreases from the elementary through the senior high levels (see Exhibit 7). Other "quality" indicators, such as discrepancies in perceptions of how counselors spend and should spend their time and principal's ratings of the quality of their staff, show similar

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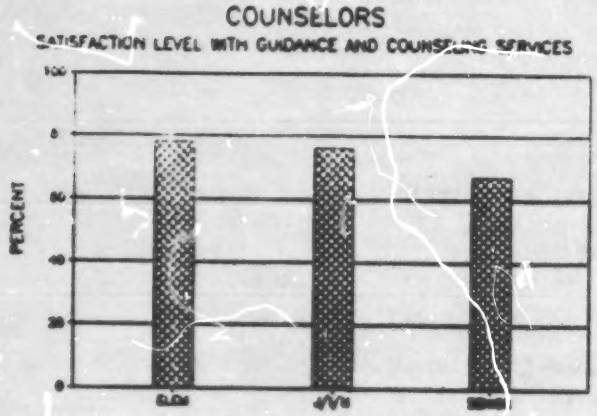
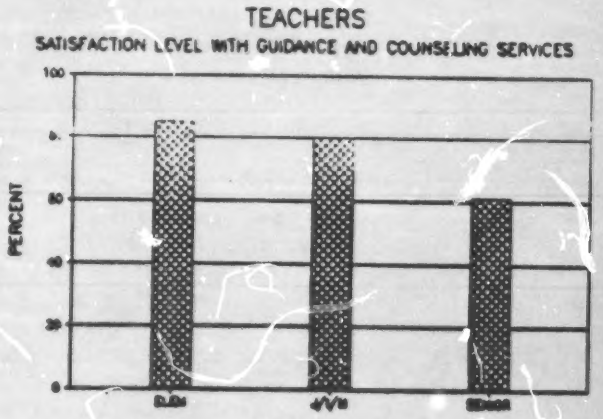
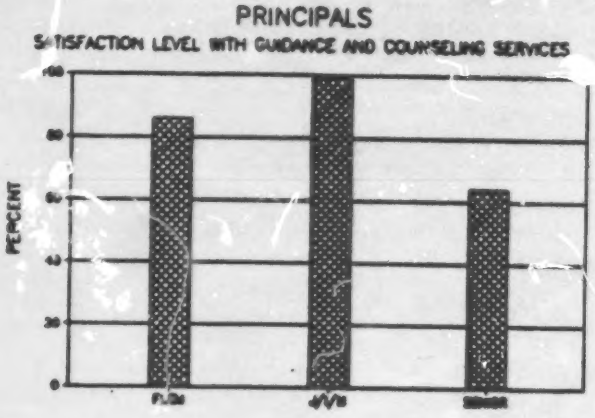
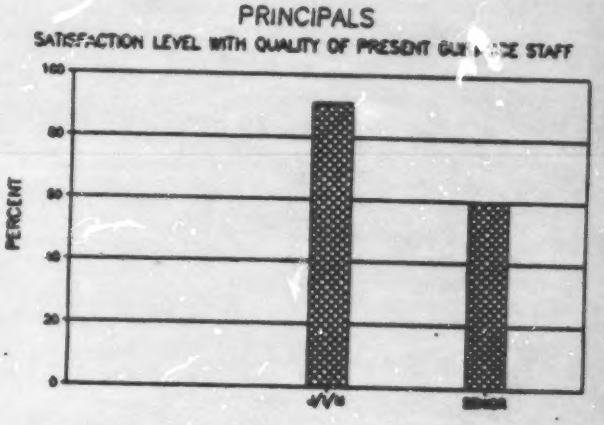
FIGURE 7

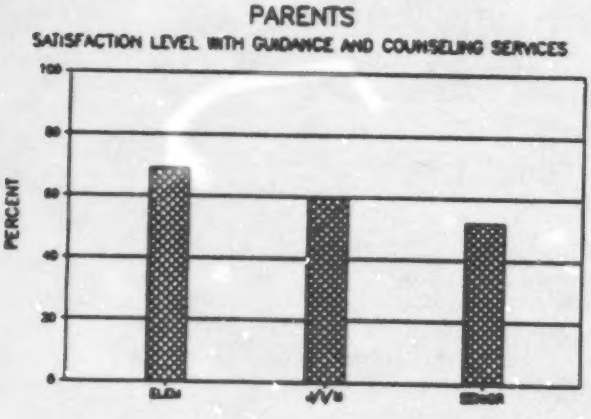
COMPARISON OF SATISFACTION LEVELS ACROSS SCHOOL LEVELS

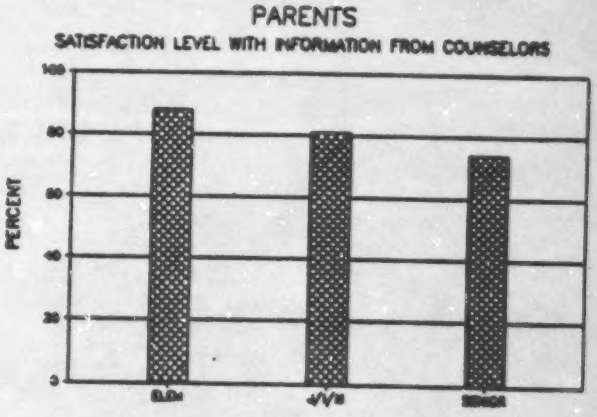


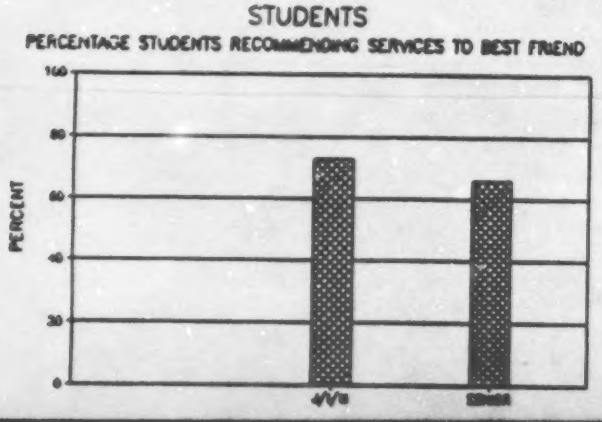


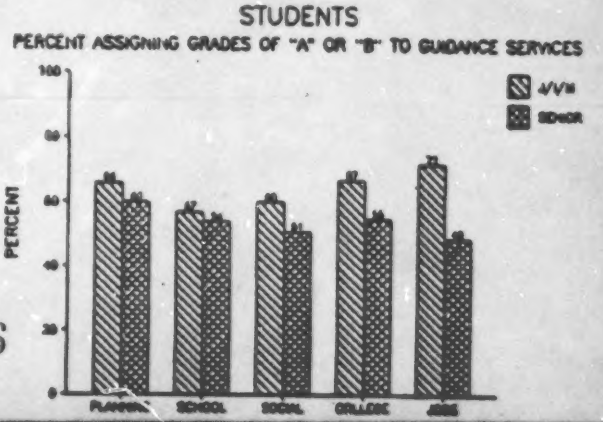












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trends across school levels. These data suggest that special attention needs to be paid to enhancing the quality of services in the senior high school. Specific findings for each school level are summarized in the following sections.

Senior High Schools

FINDINGS: Senior high counselors, principals, and teachers unanimously feel that current allocations of time among services are far from optimal and that a number of changes are needed. Additionally, principals indicate some dissatisfaction with the quality of some of the counseling staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS: There is an immediate need to examine carefully the guidance and counseling program in the senior high schools to determine what is needed to make counseling and counselors more effective. Special attention should be given to assessing how resources might be reallocated to make maximal use of counselors' special skills and training.

In the senior high schools, counselors spend the majority of their time on developing class schedules and dealing with issues related to scheduling. Not surprisingly, some time is also spent on assisting students with college and career plans. Relatively little time is spent counseling students in the personal/social area or dealing with related problems.

The majority of teachers, counselors, principals, students, and parents give the senior high counseling services a satisfactory rating. However, there is strong feeling among counselors, principals, and teachers that counselors are not allocating their time in an optimal and cost effective manner. They feel too much time is spent on scheduling and not enough is spent on counseling in other areas for which counselors have been specially trained.

Senior high students express some reluctance to contact counselors with problems; their reasons include their belief that a counselor could not help them, that the counselor is too busy, and that they feel uncomfortable talking to a counselor. In contrast to the J/I/M level, principals at the senior high level expressed considerable dissatisfaction with the quality of the present guidance staff indicating that personnel, as well as programmatic, problems probably exist.

Based on these findings, DEA recommends that the counseling program at the senior high level be carefully examined to determine what is needed to make both counseling and counselors more effective. Given the uniform concern voiced regarding the amount of time allocated to scheduling, this appears to be an important area to receive initial attention. While the use of computers may provide some relief, there are changes in procedures, staff assignments, and resources that are recommended to alleviate the burden further:

First, procedures need to be developed that would free up the counselor from having to see a student who wants to make a simple class change, i.e., a change involving a switch from one class to another within the same level. Along this line the policy concerning student schedule changes should be examined to see whether it is satisfactory or whether

some modifications should be made. Possible modifications include charging students for every schedule change above a certain number per year or requiring the principal's signature for changes requested after the official course withdrawal date. An appropriate group of staff should be convened to review current policy and suggest specific changes which should be made.

The counselors' involvement in leveling of classes also needs to be examined to see whether it is cost beneficial. For example, it might be reasonable to eliminate the the counselors' involvement if such a change does not affect the level of other classes the student takes.

Second, additional part-time clerical help should be provided to the senior high schools to provide support at three critical times during the school year when the burden of scheduling responsibilities is the greatest: at the beginning of each new semester and when preregistration for the upcoming school year occurs. The part-time staff person could take over "bubbling" of forms and other routine activities found to be appropriate. The total cost for systemwide implementation of a plan based on this idea would be approximately $36,045. This represents hiring a part-time clerk for each high school for two 3-week periods and one 2-week period each year. Using an hourly rate of a Grade 1 Step A clerk ($5.12), this represents a cost of $1,638 per school per year.

Third, if the actions described above do not adequately relieve the problem, consideration should be given to hiring a full-time scheduling coordinator. This person would be responsible for working on developing the master schedule; handling routine class schedule changes; screening students who need academic counseling and referring them to the counselor, as needed; and carrying out leveling activities. During nonpeak scheduling times, this person could assist the registrar. If this position were classified as Step A Grade 11, the total cost per position would be $20,523. For 22 high schools, the total cost would be $451,508.

It should be stressed that these recommendations are being made to free counselor time so that they can perform more counseling-related tasks and increase student outreach activities. However, reducing the burden associated with scheduling provides only a partial solution to dissatisfaction at the senior high level. Unless there is a definite guidance and counseling program in existence and strong support at all administrative levels for its implementation, misuse of this "free time" is very possible. Further, students will have to be persuaded that the counselors have both the time and interest to assist them with their problems. Counselors may have to be more proactive in their dealings with students. Finally, means will have to be developed to ensure that staff are adequately qualified either through retraining of existing staff or careful hiring as positions become vacant.

Given these concerns, it is recommended that one of the first tasks of the Guidance and Counseling Unit in the Central Office be an examination of the role of the counselor at the senior high level and the development of a strategy for solving these problems in role definition and service delivery. As a part of this examination also, a careful look should be taken at the

expectations which have been expressed regarding the senior high counselors to see if they are realistic, given the demands of the senior highs as well as the feelings of senior high school students.

Junior High/Intermediate/Middle Schools

FINDINGS: **Teachers, counselors, principals, parents, and students are generally satisfied with the guidance and counseling program in the J/I/M schools. Beyond the overall weakness in the structure and management of the MCPS guidance and counseling services, no unique problems are found at the J/I/M level.**

RECOMMENDATIONS: **No recommendations for changes specific to the J/I/M level appear necessary.**

At the J/I/M level, counselors provide counseling in the personal/social area primarily in individual rather than group settings. They spend some of their time counseling students in the area of program planning and scheduling. More time is spent than at any other school level holding conferences with parents, perhaps because of the importance of developing the students' four-year plan of studies and the general increase in parents' concern with academic issues.

Staff, principals, parents, and students are very satisfied with the counseling provided at the JIM level and generally feel that time is allocated appropriately among tasks.

At the J/I/M level problems characteristic of overall weaknesses in the structure and management of the MCPS counseling program were also found (lack of a comprehensive program, lack of specific goals and standards, insufficient professional support and inadequate job descriptions). Beyond these, however, no special issues particular to guidance at the JIM level were noted. And, it is interesting to note in light of the findings presented above regarding senior high schools that there was general satisfaction with the mix and quality of services despite the fact that a relatively large part of the counselors' time was devoted to paperwork activities.

Elementary Schools

FINDINGS: **Teachers, counselors, principals, parents and students are generally satisfied with the guidance and counseling services in the elementary schools. The type of positions counselors hold (i.e., split- or half-time) seem to affect the manner in which they are able to apportion their time among their various responsibilities.**

RECOMMENDATIONS: **No recommendations for programmatic changes specific to the elementary level appear necessary. However, it is recommended that where part-time counselors are assigned, half-time rather than split-time arrangements should be favored.**

At the elementary level, the counselor plays the role of the nurturer, focusing on helping students with personal/social problems. Counseling is typically provided to students in groups, and meetings with individual students occupy relatively less of the counselor's time. Staff, principals,

parents, and students are very satisfied with the program and feel that counselors' time is appropriately allocated.

Problems of program coordination, supervision, and support found throughout the system are also noted at the elementary level. However, one special issue related to staffing emerges in the elementary schools. Counselors, principals, and teachers indicate several problems are posed by having a less than full-time counselor position in a school. Nonetheless, the data show that half-time counselors spend more time performing activities directly related to counseling and less time in adjunct duties.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that in schools with part-time counselor positions, either priority should be given to hiring half-time over split-time counselors; or if split-time personnel are to be used, principals and area staff should work to ensure that appropriate use is being made of their time.

Supplemental Centers

FINDINGS: Principals and directors of supplemental centers believe the guidance function is being implemented adequately in their schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS: No need is seen for the addition of a guidance counselor at these centers.

Guidance and counseling services (such as students academic/vocational/behavioral counseling, parent counseling, etc.) are reportedly available and provided by staff in various positions, e.g., teacher advisors, alternative structure teachers, program assistants, therapists, social workers, child development specialists, or work study coordinators. For the most part, no need is seen for the addition of a guidance counselor at these centers. However, the needs of these centers should be considered in any new program developed to structure and monitor guidance and counseling services.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings indicate that the the guidance and counseling program in MCPS requires significant modifications in its structure and management. Changes in structure center on the development of a countywide guidance and counseling program, clarification of the counselors' role and responsibilities at each school level, provision of additional professional support and consultation, and improvement in the monitoring system. Changes in management involve the establishment of an administrative structure that will provide for the implementation of each of these functions and do so in the most efficient manner.

It should be stressed that these changes are envisioned as providing a total package whose parts are interdependent. The changes should not be adopted selectively. For example, providing a comprehensive program and set of goals, without also providing revised job descriptions as well as additional supports and training, would probably be counterproductive. Similarly, expanding the role of the Central Office without also providing for monitoring and assistance in the area offices might once again lead to a situation where resources invested in development are wasted by inadequate

implementation supports. Thus, the implementation of the recommended changes is viewed as critical to improve the guidance and counseling services that the Montgomery County Public Schools offers its students.

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APPENDIX A

TABLE A-1

Data Collection Activities

Activity	Number of Respondents ES	J/I/M	SH	Response Rate ES	J/I/M	SH
Counselor Logs	15	25	46	100	93	98
Counselor Questionnaires	29	50	82	83	70	71
Counselor Observations	8	8	10	100	100	100
Principal Interviews	18	5	5	100	100	100
Principals without counselors	6			100		
Supplementary Center Principal Interview Total:	7			100		
Parent Interviews	439	978	1455	10% of sample		
Teacher Questionnaires	124	230	358	54	50	50
Student Questionnaires	595	1011	805	92	79	67

APPENDIX B

Description of Student-Counselor Meetings

Elementary Schools

Most typically elementary students see the guidance counselor in a group setting about personal/social topics or problems. More than 50 percent of the students who saw a counselor did so three or more times. On the average, 81 percent of the students that saw a counselor felt they had enough time to meet with the counselor. Depending on the topic and format of the meeting, 45 percent or more of the students indicated that the counselor understood their feelings very well. A small percentage of students met with the counselor accompanied by their parents to discuss school work (23 %) or to discuss personal/social topics (14 %).

Though a sizable number of students sought the counselor out on their own to discuss problems individually, the majority of children who are seen on an individual basis indicated that either someone else (teacher, principal, or others) sent them to see the counselor or they were contacted directly by the counselor.

Depending on the topic and format of the meeting, 38 to 59 percent of the students who met with their counselor indicated that they did something differently as a result of their meeting(s). Few students were able to articulate what they did differently; a few wrote that they could not explain what it was that they did. The extent and depth of the impact that a counselor can have on an elementary student's life is revealed, however, in the few written responses that were obtained. After meeting with the counselor about school work, one student indicated that he started to budget his time better and improved his homework. Another student, for whom the counselor must have been a very special influence, wrote, "I now know how to go on in life and get a headstart."

Student responses to what they did differently after discussing personal/social topics included: had a better attitude, knew what to do if in a fight, stopped blaming myself for parents' divorce, was happy and cheerful, felt better about my stepfather and felt better about myself.

A small percentage (13 %) of elementary students indicated that they would have liked more help from the counselor. Less than half of these students responded to an open-ended question that asked them what kind of help they would have liked. These responses requested more help in dealing with friends (18 %), work/study habits (9 %), parents' divorce (7 %), and more time and understanding (7 %).

J/I/M Schools

The three most frequent reasons J/I/M students meet individually or in a group setting with their counselor were to discuss program planning, school performance, and personal/social topics. As a rule, students rather than counselors arranged for the first meeting. On the average, about one-fourth of J/I/M students saw the counselor three or more times. Some students saw the counselor accompanied by their parents to discuss school performance (37 %), program planning (28 %), college (20 %), and career/job- and

personal/social-related topics (18 %, respectively).

On the average, most J/I/M students (54 %) saw the counselor within a week from the day they requested the meeting. About one-third of the students saw the counselor on the same day they needed. On the average, 85 percent of J/I/M students felt the counselor understood their feelings very well or "O.K.," and 77 percent of the students reported that they had enough time to meet with the counselor.

On the average, about one-fourth of J/I/M students who met with their counselor indicated that they did something differently as a result of their meeting(s). Some of the areas students did differently following the meeting(s) with the counselor included: did all homework and work harder, moved to a higher level class, had better attitude, had more confidence, and started to think about what I want to be when I grow up.

A relatively small number of J/I/M students (13 %) felt they would have liked more help from the counselor. Of these students, 22 percent responded to an open-ended question that asked them what kind of help they would have liked. The responses indicated that they would have liked additional help with planning for the future (28 %), school work/doing better (24 %), and switching classes (10 %).

Senior High Schools

Program planning was the most frequent reason senior high students saw the counselor, followed by school performance and college-related information. Usually, students rather than the counselors asked for the first meeting. On the average, one-fourth of the senior high students saw the counselor three or more times during the school year. A small percentage of the students met with the counselor accompanied by their parents to discuss school performance (34 %), program planning (24 %), personal/social topics (21 %), career/job topics (10 %), or college-related topics.

Senior high students were more likely to discuss school- and college-related topics than to talk about personal/social problems. In terms of discussing career/job topics, students saw the career information technician (CIT) more frequently than the counselor. Approximately twice as many senior high students met with the CIT than did students who met with the counselor to discuss career- and job-related topics.

On the average, a majority of senior high students (61 %) saw the counselor within a week from the day they requested the meeting. Less than one-third of students saw the counselor the same day they asked for the meeting. Conversely, two-thirds of senior high students saw the CIT on the day they requested the meeting.

On the average, 79 percent of senior high students felt that the counselor understood their feelings very well or "OK." Seventy-two percent reported that they had enough time to meet with the counselor.

Between 17 and 33 percent of the students who met with counselors indicated that they changed either their behavior or attitude as a result of their meeting(s). Some of these changes included trying to communicate better

with teachers, putting forth more effort on school work, improving study habits, becoming more disciplined, dealing with feelings, and making specific college plans.

Over one-fourth of senior high students indicated they would have liked more help from the counselor. Some of the areas they would have liked additional help included scheduling (28 %), college (21 %), school work (9 %), and job searching (6 %).